

## INTRODUCTION

**I**N this story, fact again appears stranger than fiction and biography more fascinating than romance. The scene is Kwato, an island lying off the east coast of New Guinea, or Papua. The hero is an Englishman whose thirst for adventure brings him while a youth into contact with primitive tribes in New Zealand, and whose love for Christ leads him to devote his life to service among the savages of the South Seas. Charles Abel, however, was a man who would not have chosen such a term as heroism to be applied to his career. He was so modest, so manly, so honest, so sincere, and he possessed such a sense of humour that he was never in danger of taking himself too seriously. The account of his notable work, as given by his son, is accurate and sympathetic, but fittingly free from exaggeration or pretense.

First as a missionary teacher, then as a companion of the martyred James Chalmers, and then as the director of the new mission station on the island of Kwato, Charles Abel enters upon his thrilling task of transforming cannibals into Christians. Peril, hardship, disease and discomfort are met with courage, cheerfulness and triumphant faith. The conviction deepens that work among primitive peoples demands methods not necessary in all mission fields. He introduces manual training, industrial and agricultural work, in addition to Bible translation and religious instruction. After twenty-seven years of labour, due in large measure to an honest difference of opinion as to forms of service, he is allowed to resign and to become honorary missionary of the London Society, while free to work out his own plans in the Kwato district. This necessitates the extension of interest to a widening circle of friends and supporters. Such are found in New Zealand, in Australia, in England,

and in America. Thus the Kwato Mission of Papua, of which he was the founder, and the Kwato Extension Association, co-operating with the New Guinea Evangelization Society, aid in making him known as a beloved leader and an inspiring missionary advocate in all the great Christian centres of the world. This work in the distant Pacific is so firmly established that since his recent and tragic death it is being continued with undiminished vigour and success. In fact, during the four years which have elapsed, more Papuans have been won to Christ than during the previous forty years. The four Abel children and their devoted mother, together with eight or ten other missionaries, are giving themselves to the sacred task of extending the abiding influence of a noble life. The narrative contained in the following pages is not only a worthy tribute to that life, but is a testimony to the reality of answered prayer, to the power of the Holy Spirit, to the priceless value of human friendships, and to the transforming power of the Gospel of Christ.

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*Princeton, N. J.*



PAPUAN CLAW SAIL BOAT



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# I

## IN SEARCH OF A CAREER

**C**HARLES ABEL was a Londoner. Maintaining that the house in Bloomsbury, in which he was born on September 25th in 1863, was within the sound of Bow Bells, he liked to call himself a Cockney. He came of a high, Puritan heritage and his people were staunch Congregationalists. Consequently in politics they were Liberals and Gladstonians. The family settled in Wandsworth, where the father became a true pillar in the East Hill Congregational Church. The memory of his tireless service still remains, for he gave himself unsparingly. He was a quiet, scholarly man, with a kindly manner that belied a stoical heart, and with a dry sense of humour inclined to be cynical. He met life's reverses with a perfect mask of self-control. There was little real understanding and no intimacy between the father and his sons in those early days, for William Abel lived his life apart. In his distant way he was a kind father, punctilious in the fulfilment of what he conceived to be his duty as a parent, for he was a man with whom duty was supreme.

Charles' mother was temperamentally far removed from her husband. Where he was methodical and precise, she was whimsical and highly strung, and loved to do unexpected things on the spur of the moment.

One who remembers Charles Abel in boyhood describes him as "a very generous boy, with a free and happy spirit, and always with high ideals." A brother recalls that "from his boyhood he was singularly pure-minded. His humour was absolutely clean. I never remember any word passing his lips that could not have been uttered in the presence of a little child."

These hopeful characteristics were combined with irrepres-

sible spirits, and the parents were sometimes uneasy about their restive son, and not without misgivings as to where his uncontrollable energy would lead him. A scene that survives from those bygone days shows the anxious father sitting by his fire-side late one night listening to wild sounds emanating from a room which the younger boys occupied in the top story of the old-fashioned terraced house. Finally he lays aside his book, rises from the refuge of his deep armchair and quietly mounts two flights of stairs. But the boys, engaged in an exciting pillow fight, hear footsteps in the corridor just in time. When the door softly opens the father looks in to see his two younger sons kneeling, each one by his bedside, piously saying his prayers.

A violent-tempered master at a local school, who seemed to find relief in the frequent use of his cane, succeeded in producing in Charles a prejudice against the quest for knowledge and an overwhelming preference for play. A common close at hand spread itself out invitingly for the display of boyish spirits. The daily dismissal from school brought longed-for release, for then the boys would put away musty books and venture out upon the real things of life. From his earliest days sport, in any form, brought him untold joy.

There was cricket, football, cycling, walking and skating, according to the time of the year, but of them all cricket was always supreme. Charles began to shape well as a bat, but was a more formidable opponent with a ball. As he grew into youth local cricket teams began to covet him as a "medium pace off-break bowler." Tennis had not yet become a widely played game in England. Abel remembered the first time he ever saw the game played, and his mystification at the strange rite, as it seemed to him, of putting the first ball into the net!

Charles had a boy's love of energetic movement and speed, and a boy's complete fearlessness. His friends can still see him, raising himself precariously on his old-fashioned "bone-shaker" (bicycle), as it flew down a steep hill, until he stood erect with his feet firmly planted on the saddle and the handle-bars, his arms outstretched.

When Moody and Sankey first came to England, bringing a new power and vision to the whole Christian Church, Charles Abel was a small boy of eleven. Their coming gave a spiritual impetus to East Hill, as it did to many churches, and the whole Abel family was influenced by the new religious zeal that the American evangelists set alight. The two younger boys accompanied their mother to the Agricultural Hall at Islington, whither large crowds were drawn to listen spell-bound to D. L. Moody's expansive presentation of a glorious and vital Gospel. He drove his message home with great force, and when he closed with an appeal for decision, the brothers, Robert and Charles, with the simple sincerity of children, gave themselves to God. This was no passing emotion. That night at home they prayed together with great earnestness, having first stopped the old pendulum clock that hung in their bedroom so as not to be disturbed by its loud ticking. From that time onwards their lives were pledged and neither turned back.

The blessing received through the famous evangelists was freely expressed and continually renewed in service. The family became prominent in Christian activity, each member, while still in their teens, finding work in Sunday school teaching and in slum missions.

In those days family diversions were found chiefly within the home. Young people had "accomplishments," and were not so dependent upon outside professional entertainment for their enjoyment as their successors are today. William Abel was one of the pioneers of the Tonic Sol-fa system and found his entire recreation in music. His children inherited his musical gifts and in this way the home life was greatly enriched. Many evenings were spent with the eldest daughter at the piano, the three boys singing bass, tenor and baritone, and the youngest girl playing her violin. The family choir and orchestra were much in demand. Charles had wonderful powers of mimicry and came to be regarded as the comedian of the family. With his natural exuberance and versatility he could always be relied upon to amuse the company at a moment's notice. In any trying situation he could always hit upon the ridiculous and re-

store mirth. "We had no need to go away from home in search of entertainment as long as Charles was there," writes a brother, looking back on those days.

At the age of sixteen Charles was no lover of books. His father's practical mind concluded, therefore, that the sooner he learned to earn his living, the better. And for the next few years Charles, beginning at the bottom of the ladder, found himself in one job after another, and in each of them despairing of his chance of doing anything worthwhile. He was enthusiastic and ambitious and was appalled by the small prospects held out by his first employment. His father was not ambitious in the worldly sense. To him, the exercise of such qualities as patience, endurance and faithfulness meant more than material success. It was enough that there were opportunities for his son to develop in character and to "prove his worth."

These were hard days for Charles. His work did not irk him so much as the vision of the deadening routine of a small job. All his life he was never to be content with anything mediocre. Again and again he resorted to strategy, gained his mother's sympathetic ear and, with her aid, succeeded in winning a reluctant consent to seek a new position. Those were the days of parental authority, and the father did not look lightly upon any turning back, once the hand was put to the plough. In later years, when Charles Abel himself was a father and full of high hopes for his children, he would often look back and marvel at the complacency with which his father would have seen him settle down to an entirely unimportant position in life.

At last when he found work that justified his best efforts with a firm on the Corn Exchange, it was only to see his hopes suddenly terminate. One day, as he indulged in the mad thrills that he managed to extract from his "bone-shaker," he collided with a horse-wagon and, as a result, lay for weeks recovering from his broken bones. He emerged at length from the hospital to find that he had lost his job, though none of the daring for which this was the price.

Long unenlivening hours addressing labels at Mudie's library



was his lot in his next calling. Calligraphy had been accounted of great importance at one of the earlier schools he had attended, so that his handwriting was neat, flowing and legible. Among the literary characters who used to frequent the library was Matthew Arnold. Being an educationalist as well as a poet, he noticed Charles' fine handwriting and at once commiserated with him. "That is your doom," he said dismally—a pronouncement that was hardly likely to make things brighter for the youth already chafing against his lot.

At this period cricket and football seemed to be the only consolation. With the day's misery behind him, Charles forgot disappointments and enjoyed his sport to the utmost. The crack of the bat, the neatly cut ball, the smart fielding, the close play, against a fading twilight, these combined the sweetest music. Winter also had its compensation in exciting contests on the football field. Charles put his very best into his sport, and he excelled.

When Robert and Charles Abel used to lure their sisters to the piano and sing sea-songs and "chanteys" at the top of their voices, it was obvious that they were looking longingly towards the far horizon. "To the West; to the West," and "A Life on the Ocean Wave," were two favourites that carried their spirits over the seas. The brothers, who were much thrown together, had not outgrown the age of dreams. They shared a yearning for venture. Two years of office routine seemed to fan the adventuresome spark, rather than to extinguish it. Finally their ideas began to take shape. The conspiracy was to go abroad, the possibility of America as a door of escape was dispelled by letters from a friend who had crossed the Atlantic and whose experiences sounded too much like the kind of thing they were hoping to leave behind. An appeal from New Zealand, for cadets to learn colonial farming, finally brought matters to a head. Here was a country still in its early days. Beyond the first footholds of civilization there was still the life that was lived in the sun by day and under the canopy of the stars by night. The brave resistance of the Maori warriors was still freshly remembered and had woven romance around the distant

colony in the Pacific. There was no small stir in the Abel home when the bombshell was dropped, and the boys announced that they contemplated going to the very ends of the earth. Remonstrances were without avail, though Robert agreed to follow his brother later in order to make things easier for the family. Finally the father issued an ultimatum. His sons were to have three days in which to ponder all the advice they had been given; at the end of that time they were to make their own decision and to abide by it. On their own heads the responsibility would thenceforth lie.

"You have been thinking over this matter for three days," announced the father gravely at the dinner-table on the fateful third day. There was considerable tension in the family at the moment. "Will you stay in England as we wish, or will you go abroad?" "I will go abroad, Father," was Charles' unhesitating reply.

It was on a brisk October day in 1881 when the *Wellington*, a bravely-rigged windjammer, put out to sea on her long journey to the antipodes. The wind was tearing at her riggings and there was a running crested sea. Some of the cadets on board, leaving home for the first time, suffered agonies of seasickness in those furious first days. Abel soon overcame the earlier discomforts of the voyage and began to enjoy the life of the ship with great zest. The sea cast a spell over him, and all his life he loved its many moods. The flying spray, the curl of mounting waves, the flapping of sails, the creak of taut ropes, these and many other impressions remained with him permanently. All kinds of weather were encountered during the long voyage that lasted nearly three months. There were idle, breathless days, with the ship becalmed; there were days when she battled against a gale, with the sky wheeling madly overhead; there were days of heat and days of icy blasts; days of "the wind's wet wings, and fingers drip with rain."

New Zealand did not offer the golden opportunity that Abel was seeking. Before many months were passed he realized that the special training that had attracted him in the first place was not forthcoming on the farm to which he was assigned. The

cadets were given the menial tasks of labourers, but of instruction in expert methods there was none. Once more Abel felt that his time was being wasted. Again he was chafing at circumstances that had no importance for his future—a fate that had followed him out from England.

Sometimes Abel used to accompany expeditions to the aboriginal Maori settlements to trade blankets for Kauri gum which the Maoris unearthed in their forests. One day he saw an old Maori sitting huddled and dejected, with terrible suppurating wounds on his body. Abel asked whether it was a dog that had mauled him, and there was no reply. He enquired again.

“Dog?” scowled the Maori. “Dog or white man!”

This episode made a great impression upon Abel. His blood used to boil at the thought of the ill-treatment the Maoris in remote districts sometimes received from white people. On one occasion his companion on a trading excursion insulted a Maori woman, throwing a potato and hitting her in the face. Abel at once saw red and succeeded in giving the offender the thrashing that he deserved. The Maoris appreciated this action and treated Abel with great respect. For the first time he was the aggressive champion of a coloured race, though he did not then realize that he had entered upon a rôle which he was to play through life.

Charles Abel had not come all the way to New Zealand to labour at a pick and shovel, but to be instructed in scientific agricultural methods. He had no patience with anything less. Here in this land of opportunity he found himself once more in a *cul-de-sac*. His protests that his employer had broken his contract bore no result. One morning the cadet was found to be missing. The bird had flown.

Abel took refuge in a Y. M. C. A. where he earned his board as a very popular secretary, host and general organizer. He refused to be bluffed by threats of law and cast around unsuccessfully for more remunerative work; but the dire need of money, and the police on his trail, finally drove him to the forest. Taking with him only the barest of necessities, in high

spirits he travelled on foot to a timbered district known as the Wade.

Abel knew that the Maoris in the Wade were gum-diggers. He was confident that he would soon make friends with them, perhaps join them in their work and eventually manage to trade with them. These people, however, looked upon the young Englishman with suspicion. His friendly overtures put them still more on their guard and they made it quite clear that they wanted no white man hanging about their camp.

The first night Abel slept in a rough shelter that he put up in the bush. The following day he settled himself in, and built a proper hut of ti-tree. He bought sweet potatoes from the Maoris, boiled his billy on an open fire, and hunted for Kauri gum in the forest. A glorious sense of freedom and adventure filled him, and he began to live a real bushman's life.

To one brought up in the amenities of civilization, the life of the bush had its reverse side. Rainy weather set in. Day after day he was imprisoned, and night after night was hushed to sleep by the sound of drenching rain on the low roof of his camp. Rolled up in his blanket, he would sit in solitude and deep contemplation, far from the world he knew and cut off from men. In spite of his love of human companionship, this complete isolation was no nightmare to him. As he sat thinking through many problems he learned some useful lessons, and was able to view his life from a detached position of vantage. In later years the sound of heavy rain at night, common in the tropics, would always bring him a wistfulness, and a sense of exquisite pleasure. He liked to lie in bed to listen to it, for it always carried him back to an experience that had undoubtedly enriched him.

For a long time Abel's efforts to make friends with his Maori neighbours failed completely. One morning, however, as he emerged from the doorway of his hut a tall Maori youth greeted him with a friendly smile and laid a fine river cod on a rock at his feet. Thus ended a long term of loneliness. The two young men, the *pakeha* (white man) and the Maori, began to talk together in halting pidgin English. Eka, the Maori boy, helped

to repair and improve Abel's hut. While they both worked the conversation was enlightening.

"What-for you no all-same 'nother fella white man?" asks the boy earnestly. "You no do bad thin along Maori. You no spoil 'em Maori girl. What-for you 'nother kind?"

Abel told the reason. The future missionary talked to the brown-skinned boy about God, whom he served and strove to follow.

Eka's father was an old-time cannibal, and a chief among his people. When the old man was taken ill Abel was sent for; he nursed him and lived in his *wharé*. He sent to the nearest township for medicine; talked to the anxious relatives who gathered round and told them of the Friend in Heaven who could make the sick well again. During the illness the Maoris learned to bow their heads while their new *pakeha* friend prayed to his unseen Friend to heal the old chief.

When the old man recovered, so deep was his gratitude that he gave Abel his dearest treasure—a greenstone battle-axe, his unfailing weapon of bygone days. With this he had killed his enemies and had many times vindicated a proud reputation.

"'E kill 'em plenty men. *Me eat 'em!*" was the old man's terse comment as he parted with this last trophy of his former greatness.

During the daytime Abel would take his place with the men as they dug for gum and in the evenings he would tell them yarns that held them spellbound. He told of the wonders of the civilized world, but the stories that gripped them most, and that they used to ask to hear again and again, were Bible stories.

A proof of the friendship these Maoris felt for Abel was an invitation to attend a *tangi*. This was a ceremony connected with the exhumation of the bones of a chief, and the redispotion of the cleansed bones in their final resting-place. The *tangi* lasted a week and the ceremonies were jealously guarded from white men. Maoris foregathered from all directions, and Abel had many opportunities to witness to them concerning the real hope beyond the grave. He had learned by now to speak

their language and started reading classes in the evenings which were well attended. Eka and a group of boys of his own age became Christians, and with these youths Abel enjoyed real fellowship. They were the best type of Maori, tall, powerfully built, with the flashing smile and childlike humour of Polynesians.

The Maoris entrusted all their business affairs to their white friend. He used to sell their gum for them, do their bargaining, and see that fair prices were obtained for their wares. He became widely known as agent for the Maoris. The white men and women with whom he was dealing on the outer edge of white penetration were of the roughest type. Immorality was both universal and blatant at these outposts, and Abel had a hard fight to keep his mind above the level of his sordid surroundings. The struggle against becoming unconsciously affected in his outlook by the loose living that flauntingly went on around him drove him to earnest prayer. At times his only refuge was to make for the hills where, under an open sky, he would spend hours alone with God before he dared to return to the evil current into which his work continually led him.

There came a time of crisis for the young exile, a crisis which grew out of the conviction that his haphazard life was not the best. He believed that God had a definite plan for him. There was a memorable night of prayer; a choosing of paths. One course was to carve out his own career: a tempting prospect to one of Abel's self-confidence. The alternative was to surrender the planning to God, and be willing to follow step by step whatever way He might open up before him. When dawn broke there was a deep peace in his heart and the calm of victory. He had spurned the well-watered plain of self-advancement and had gained the promise.

Prayer and Christian work among the Maoris made life in the bush possible for Abel. He had run away from unprofitable circumstances and had stumbled upon the very work to which he was to give his whole life. Out in the open life of the bush he had become a very different individual from the pale youth who had sickened at the monotonous routine of a London office.



He was lean and tough and bronzed. He had learned to receive his inspiration from the Source and was developing a sturdy trust in God, independent of earthly props.

When Abel said good-bye to his Maori friends and returned to Auckland he realized his need of better education. This was beyond his reach unless he could find regular employment with opportunities for saving money. The return to civilization brought him the companionship of a fraternity of young men recently arrived from England, all kindred spirits who shared in many escapades and remained staunch friends for life. The seriousness that stern experiences in the bush had put upon young Abel was thrown off for a time in the rush of his new activities.

Then came a serious illness. A rumour that he had died even found its way into the papers. There was a long and painful climb back to health, and continual shocks for those who believed that he was dead, and would meet him suddenly like some apparition. His funds were now depleted and there followed a weary search for employment at a time of industrial depression when the numbers of unemployed in the cities was very great. Finally, when his hope was at its lowest ebb, there was a provision of the very thing he was wanting. One day, after the usual fruitless search, he was lying exhausted in his brother's rooms, pondering over the situation and praying for guidance, when a friend came in. He was manager of a grain store and had been hastily summoned to England. He could sail that same afternoon if someone could be found to take his place. An agreement was made and Abel, accompanying the visitor, took charge without further ado. Thus he suddenly found himself with work that put little strain upon his slowly returning health and also gave him ample opportunity for study.

He built a den at the back of the store with corn and wheat sacks and here he sat for long undisturbed hours poring over his books, studying his Bible, Greek and Latin. Customers were infrequent, and they usually rode in from the country on certain days in the week. One day the owner of the business

arrived unexpectedly, and was taken back to find a complete stranger in charge. He was reassured, however, when he learned that this young man was Charles Abel of Maori trading repute, and one whom he had often wished to meet.

One of the most decisive incidents during this period was the visit of an old Maori who came in great trouble. His wife was dangerously ill and his first words, when he appeared unheralded at the door, were: "They tell me you have a Friend who can make the sick well again." The story of the answer to Abel's prayers for a member of his race in another district had not escaped him. This appeal for help touched Abel deeply, and came as a definite call to service. He spoke to the old man of the Saviour and His compassion for men. The need of these simple people began to weigh heavily upon him and gave an added impetus to his studies.

In business journeys from time to time "up country" Abel met many interesting and unusual characters. He always came back full of his latest adventures, which his friends would rally round to hear. The little store had become a centre of the sociability that Abel loved, and often in later years he and his friends looked back with mirth upon those unhampered days.

One day when Abel was deep in his books, and finding it uphill work, the clatter of hoofs outside brought him to the door. A stranger dismounted and hitched his pony to the post. "What do you want me for?" he asked abruptly. Abel replied that so far from wanting him, he had never set eyes on the man before and had no idea who he was.

"I believe God has sent me to you," was the stranger's next astonishing remark. "I felt impelled to dismount here."

Abel led the visitor to the improvised study among the wheat sacks, and showed him the scene of his struggles with Greek and Latin. As a result of this interview the unexpected caller, who was senior student at the Wesleyan College at Three Kings, agreed to direct Abel's studies, coaching him and giving him the very help he had been wanting. Opportunities for service and Christian fellowship were the outcome of this providential meeting, and with it all there was given to Abel still



more a sense of purpose in his life: a realization that God was overruling his circumstances and directing his ways.

He kept a jealous eye on the future, and was impatient to know how certain promises that he had made to God out in the forest were to be fulfilled. He had long talks on the subject with his brother, Robert, on whose advice he called on Thomas Spurgeon, then in charge of the Baptist Tabernacle in Auckland. His father, C. H. Spurgeon, had been a big factor in the religious life of the Abel family in England, and the encouragement of the younger Spurgeon was of great help at this time. Abel's own ideas for further education began to take shape, and his call to a life of service was confirmed. He wrote a long letter home to his father, telling him all that had happened, his thoughts for the future and his desire for training. The eagerly-awaited reply came at last, expressing paternal joy. Its burden briefly was: "Come home."

Abel's temporary position in charge of the grain store terminated with the return of the original manager. Ways and means of getting back to England were the next consideration. Early one morning, having packed his belongings, he set off on one of the most memorable walks of his life, tramping all day and reaching Kaipara in the evening. He enjoyed every step of the fifty-odd miles, glorying in the exercise, the open air, and the return to the giant trees and rich verdure of New Zealand bush country.

Kaipara was a timber district, and Abel knew that, although work would be rough, there was plenty of it available for any one willing to toil hard. He joined a timber gang and found himself in rough company. Conditions among the men in the timber yards and in the forest camps put him on his mettle. He refused to weaken his stand as a Christian, but the more openly he attested his faith, the greater became the persecution.

His experience as a bushman once more was a gruelling one. He put his shoulder to his work literally, as a ganger, taking his full share in the hauling of the timber to port, and the loading of the vessels that carried it to Australia.

Eventually he was taken aboard a timber ship to serve before

the mast and to help with the unloading in Sydney. Working as a stevedore on the Sydney docks, Abel wondered whether his friends in England would have recognized him. He was ragged and sunburnt, but as buoyant in spirits as ever, finding always something to enthrall him. His employers at Kaipara had given him letters of introduction to people in Sydney, and on being hospitably invited to their homes Abel realized forcibly that his long exile in out-of-the-way haunts had made him unaccustomed to the niceties of civilization. Not even possessed of a pair of socks, he was unfit, in appearance at least, for decent society. The next thing was a shopping expedition from which he emerged feeling as though he had returned to a different world after long absence.

With his own savings, supplemented by a generous contribution from his brother, Abel had enough money to take him home to England in comfort. He was enjoying the unfamiliar amenities of a P. & O. liner when he learned, on the second day out at sea, that an old Baptist minister was travelling steerage. The old man was suffering badly from seasickness, in a communal cabin on a low deck, and right over the screw. Abel insisted upon exchanging berths, himself returning to rough conditions once more in the steerage. The rest of the journey, endured rather than enjoyed, was uneventful. When they reached Port Said, however, an Arab boy was being ill-used by a fellow passenger when Abel happened on the scene. He was never to be a passive witness of the ill-treatment of coloured people and could not restrain the impulse to defend the little Arab. His recent life had made him muscular, so that his aid was effective. But the rest of his sightseeing was connected with the interior of the French police station, and both he and his pugnacious fellow traveller returned to their ship escorted by gendarmes. Abel's position throughout his life was that of mediator between the races: an interpreter of the best motives of his own and an advocate for the claims of less privileged people, with whose side of any dispute he was always quick to sympathize. Some forty years later, when visiting a monument in New England to an early pioneer who had been scalped by

Red Indians, Abel's characteristic comment was: "So far I have not met the stone which records the story from the Indian standpoint."

Excitement was great in the Abel family when the youngest son arrived home. He was full of his adventures and kept the family spellbound round the fireside for many a winter evening. Unaccustomed to comfortable beds, he found it difficult to sleep. After tossing about for the first part of the night he would leave his bed, stretch himself out on the floor, and sleep soundly until morning. The family gave their hero such a welcome home that it was quite impossible to find sufficient calm in which to discuss plans. William Abel, a man to whom peace was essential, took his son down to Deal for a few unhurried days far from the madding crowd and they went together for long walks on the Downs, talking over the future.



A LONG PAPUAN WAR CANOE



## II

### STUDENT LIFE IN ENGLAND

**C**HESHUNT College,<sup>1</sup> standing on a carpet of green lawns beside a winding river, its turrets hidden in the trees, seemed to preserve an appearance of isolation; an air of remoteness from the world of affairs. And yet the influence emanating from this academic retreat was reaching the far corners of the earth and had still an important part to play in a distant and little known savage country. Cheshnut had already given to New Guinea the famous pioneer, James Chalmers, and was about to send H. M. Dauncey and F. W. Walker in his wake. Shortly before their departure for the field, there appeared on the scene a new student, destined to make an indelible mark on the history of that same great island.

Charles Abel entered Cheshunt in 1884. He was twenty-two years of age and very unlike the average freshman. Although younger in years than most of his college mates, he was considerably older in experience. He had travelled around the world and had fought his way through all sorts of conditions. He had held his own against many types of men, most of whom the average student had never met outside of fiction.

The new student was at first somewhat of a puzzle to his contemporaries. The deeply serious side there undoubtedly was to his character was not easy to reconcile with his high spirits and mischievous humour. His athletic figure, sunburnt face and keen, blue eyes that were full of merriment, was the first impression that still remains with his survivors. A fellow student describes him at that time as "bronzed and sturdy."

His personality quickly asserted itself. He stepped at once

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<sup>1</sup> At that time Cheshunt College was located at Bishop Stortford, but later removed to Cambridge.

into a position of popularity and influence. Breezy and unconventional, he had in a marked degree the grace of friendliness, and a winning charm and courtesy; a man of dream and daring. There was more than a tinge of the Puritan tradition in his convictions and temperament, and yet he was always foremost in all fun and frolic.

Abel entered heartily into the life of the college, which he lived to the full. He was not the type of student that is usually popular with professors. He felt that there were things that would be of more practical value to him in the future than the very systematic study of theology and the classical languages. His professors naturally disagreed, though they recognized that he was a promising student with gifts and resolution. It was, perhaps, the corporate life of the college that meant most to Abel. His natural sociability found ample opportunity for expression, and the fellowship of those of his own kind was for him always a pleasure that could scarcely be surpassed.

Abel's exuberance could not remain hidden. It was not long before the explanation of many pranks and practical jokes, mysteriously executed, began inevitably to be laid at his door. Members of the college in turn would find themselves the victims of some embarrassing situation, and would know too well to whose ingenuity they owed their plight. Whatever else Abel did in college, the most indelible impression that he left with his contemporaries concerns his irrepressible humour. He earned a reputation that followed him for many years. A typical "rag" was one engineered at the expense of a freshman, somewhat older in years than the others, who was rash enough to warn everyone that, as a former schoolmaster, he was well acquainted with all their tricks. Abel and his companions felt it their duty to induce a more humble state of mind on the part of the newcomer. One day volumes of smoke began to issue from the freshman's study. Two or three students were at once at hand to offer advice. The chimney was evidently blocked, and the thing to do was to send for a sweep, which one of them immediately set off to do. In course of time the sweep arrived, hiccupping, half tipsy, and begrimed with soot. Few of Abel's

friends would have recognized in this disreputable-looking object with a drooping eye and a husky voice, the instigator of the whole affair. After inspection, the "sweep" declared that there was a "hobstruction 'igher hup." The rooks must have been building there. He must climb on the roof to remove it. The harassed freshman became alarmed at the thought of a man, muddled with drink, venturing upon the roof. It was sheer madness, he protested; there might be a serious accident and a coroner's verdict involving them all. He was horrified at the callousness of his much-too-interested friends, who assured him that responsibility rested with the "sweep." Finally the straw stuffing, with which the chimney had been previously plugged, was removed, and the "sweep" disappeared, demanding a half sovereign for his services. This was exorbitant, but the "sweep" refused to take less, declaring that he might easily have slipped and found himself in heaven! All present agreed that it was a reasonable charge, considering the danger, and finally, with manifest reluctance, the money was put into a grubby outstretched hand. The "sweep" thereupon embraced his victim, rubbing a sooty face against his cheek. On being violently thrust back, he pretended to become pugnacious, taking off his coat and demanding a fight, until the rest of the company fell upon him and removed him bodily. The dupe of all this personally thanked each one of them for protecting him. That evening at supper Abel stood up and sang a song, descriptive of the whole episode, to the confusion of the victim, who, however, had the good grace to acknowledge that he had deserved everything. The half sovereign went into the missionary box, and the subject of the "rag" afterwards spent many years of fruitful service as a missionary in China.

Such incidents explain why contemporaries agree in likening Abel's entrance to Cheshunt to the coming of a "whirlwind," and why their memories of him are mostly connected with the spice that he brought to the life of the college. His rare ability to amuse others made him much in demand in concerts and "squashes." His repertoire contained several well-remembered favourites, such as his presentation of a quack-doctor at a



country fair, or "Pink Pills for Pale People." Often his efforts were quite impromptu and he would merely relate some humorous adventure from his New Zealand experiences. Among unusual people in out-of-the-way places there had been many episodes that had appealed to his sense of humour, and all these good things were shared with his friends.

A story is told of an occasion when Abel was staying with his friends, the Stephen Ballards, on the Malvern Hills, where he was often a welcome guest. The vicar of a local church was a strange dour man who was never known to laugh. Abel and his friends attended an entertainment in connection with this church. Things were becoming decidedly flat when one of the organizers of the affair whispered an appeal to Abel to come to their rescue. He mounted the platform and, in a few moments, had his audience transported to the back blocks of New Zealand. He gave a vivid picture of "up country" life in the colonies, in which the chief character, named Mrs. Tippetts, who could not remember the name of her religion and kept appealing impatiently to her husband: "What am I, Tippetts?" He could not remember the name, either. Suddenly the vicar, seated in the audience, let forth a loud and unexpected peal of laughter. The audience was so taken aback that they laughed, too. And the more the parson laughed at the story, the more the rest of the audience laughed at the parson, until there was complete confusion. The narrator never finished the story.

College days were great days for Abel. In the field of sport he was always to the fore. Once again there was the music of the cricket field to charm his ears throughout the long summer afternoons. It seemed like a stroke of irony that an invitation to play for Herts County should have coincided with an important examination in Hebrew. However, when that day arrived one place in the examination hall was vacant, and one candidate was miles away out in the sunshine, winning laurels for his county on the cricket field.

When Abel toured the counties with a cricket team during one summer vacation he allowed no uncertainty as to his position as a Christian. The members of the team soon learned

that a blasphemous or coarse allusion would not pass unchallenged. "In any unpleasantness," recalls a chum of those days, "he had a strange power of changing a wrong atmosphere by a right word, often producing good feeling by a witty remark. He was the first to strike where courage was needed, and without offence he could utter a firm and severe rebuke."

Abel was sometimes "ragged" by his fellows for his serious outlook on life. However, being a master hand at this game, he could well understand their impulses and even enjoyed the pranks played at his expense. One night the cricket team lodged at a country hotel where a religious organization had placed a Bible in every room. These Bibles were collected from the entire hotel and stacked in Abel's room.

The supreme enjoyment that Abel derived from cricket was unlike any other earthly pleasure. He could become entirely absorbed in a game, and could enter keenly into the spirit of contests at which he was not present. Although he spent most of his life on the opposite side of the globe, he followed every move of the annual county contests in England and was an authority on Australian and Test cricket. His eyes would glisten as he read the newspaper reports of big matches, the scene would live before him, though he would be far away.

Towards the end of his college course he was playing in a match when a ball struck him on the hand, breaking his wrist. Though in considerable pain, he could not bring himself to leave the field. He not only continued to play, but managed somehow to run up a score, thereby saving his side from a complete routing. Unfortunately, the injury to his wrist was permanent, and he never regained the bowling ability for which he had been famous. Abel's fortitude on that occasion was greatly extolled, though perhaps for him it required more courage to leave a cricket match than to play in spite of pain.

Charles Abel was one for whom religion glorified life, lifted the commonplace out of its setting, and gave to everything a high purpose and importance. He enjoyed his work, fellowship and sport all the more keenly because he was a Christian. There were no separated compartments in his life. The phys-



ical and the spiritual were closely interwoven, as was shown by his habit of combining physical exercise with prayer. In New Zealand he had developed the habit of praying while he walked and found it easy to get into communion with God while alone on a long tramp. Many lanes and country highways became doubly associated in his mind with the pleasure and exercise they had brought both to body and soul.

The students at Cheshunt used to preach on Sundays in village chapels in Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire. Abel was not considered one of the budding preachers, yet he was much in demand. The story is told of an old deacon who handed him an honorarium of half a crown as he was about to leave the chapel after the service, and whispered: "You have done your best, my boy, but tell them to send us a ten-bobber next time." He never attempted to familiarize himself with any of the subtler forms of presentation, and was far more concerned with giving his hearers the pure Gospel in the most logical guise. He was greatly influenced by the preaching of C. H. Spurgeon, who, of all great preachers of the time, was one who met people on their own ground, appealed foremost to their hearts, and whose power of speech lay in simplicity. The Rev. J. G. Henderson, a contemporary Cheshunt student and the present secretary of the college, writes of Abel as a student preacher:

Although not so concerned with stringing words together as in doing things, he was one of our most acceptable preachers. His tense earnestness, his vivid speech, and his faculty for retelling in a persuasively personal way the story of the Gospels, made him greatly desired in the pulpits of village chapels.

It was the same with Abel whether his audience was composed of an English country congregation or the Maoris in the New Zealand bush. It was as a story-teller that he shone, and his straightforward sermons, in which Biblical narratives realistically came to life, were not easily forgotten.

Once when staying with his friends on the Malvern Hills he promised Miss Ada Ballard that he would preach the following

Sunday on any subject she chose. Being a lover of nature, she immediately plucked a tiny daisy that was growing in the lawn at her feet and handed it to the young preacher as the subject of his discourse. When the time came Abel stood in the pulpit holding the little starry flower in his hand. He pointed to the dark underlying sepals and spoke of sin. The specks of crimson at the top of each snow-white petal recalled to his hearers the blood of Jesus that washes whiter than snow, while the little golden centre bore witness to the crown of eternal reward. He could hold his audience, and yet he was no preacher in the accepted sense of the word. He was merely a tried and tested Christian sharing his own beliefs and experiences with his hearers and backing his words by the Book.

In a pulpit, separated from the rest of mankind, he could not feel free. In debate, however, on an equal footing with those whom he addressed, he was far happier. A contemporary testifies: "In Debating Society he gave and he got enjoyment, for he possessed a ready wit and power of repartee, together with a remarkable aptitude for arranging his arguments, and a most persuasive way in presenting them." But it is as a talker that his friends best remember him, versatile, humourous and always interesting. In any battle of words he shone. His epigrams were often quoted in the college. Once at a cricket match at which there was a large turnout of college officials and their ladies, Abel, bending down to fasten on his cricket pad, received a resounding smack from behind, delivered by the small, impulsive daughter of one of the professors. The shocked relatives of the young offender were horrified and the professor was giving stern rebuke when Abel broke the tense atmosphere by saying: "That's all right, professor; my extremity was her opportunity!"

Five crowded years at Cheshunt drew to a close. Often he was to recall the familiar scenes: the buildings, the grounds with the river running through; the scene of many pranks. There were times of fellowship around study fires and there were some awful moments, as well as pleasant, to be remembered. There was the regretted occasion when Abel, with a jug

of water poised at an upper window, waited for a friend to emerge below and, to his everlasting dismay, succeeded in deluging the venerable and beloved Principal who stepped un-awares into the cataract from above.

These years of preparation supplied much of Abel's previous lack. The wise influence of the admired and spiritually-minded Principal, Dr. Reynolds, the friendships of his fellow-students and varied experiences in the field of sport, all contributed to the equipment of the future missionary. Abel now looked ahead to a man-sized task.

The original intention had been to return to New Zealand to work amongst the Maoris, and a friend in England was prepared to back him financially if he would return to the colony. Abel had been praying a great deal for guidance when the London Missionary Society brought to his notice a new work that was being opened up in New Guinea. Three Cheshunt men had already responded to this call. The appeal was for men of courage and for pioneers. The call of the wild was already deeply implanted in Abel's soul, and the more his thoughts and prayers centred upon New Guinea, the more he seemed to hear the Spirit's voice within him saying: "Thou art the man!"

The decision having been made, Charles Abel was accepted by the Society in 1889, and was appointed to this new and romantic field. He wanted to go forth unordained, to work as a plain man amongst his fellow-men. A "Reverend" before his name, he said, would put him upon a pedestal, would handicap him where ordinary men of the world were concerned. Ordination would neither alter the scope of his call, which was from God, nor the whole-hearted terms of his response. While he admitted the necessity of ordination in special circumstances, he objected to the confinement of his influence, which he felt this would mean, for the sake of conditions which in his own case were not of supreme importance. His later experience as a missionary strengthened these convictions. However, he finally yielded to the persuasion of his revered Principal, Dr. Reynolds, by whom he was to be ordained, and relinquished

his plan to go out as a lay missionary like the Apostle Paul, though that nevertheless continued to be his ideal.

The last year in England was spent in medical training at the London Hospital. During the holidays he sought to make the most of the fleeting joys of fellowship that were soon to be denied him. He went for long walks with his friends. Famous of these was a walk from London to Cambridge, and there were others of similar distance. But Abel was looking ahead too eagerly to indulge in any regrets at parting with such joys. His passage to Australia had been booked on an inferior vessel, but later, providentially as it proved to be, the passage was transferred to the P. & O.'s next sailing. On June 27th, 1889, he bade good-bye to England and to the large circle of friends that seemed automatically to have gathered round him wherever he had gone. Family, Cheshunt associates, and L. M. S. representatives were down to see him off at Tilbury, where the *Britannia* lay at Berth with the Blue Peter flying from her masthead.

Sailing on the same ship was one Beatrice Moxon, travelling to Australia with her parents. She opened a little parcel in her cabin containing a copy of the newly published *Daily Light*, the parting gift of a friend. The text for that day was: "Who shall *be able* to stand," though she who read it little guessed the strange hint it bore as to her own future name. This journey meant the breaking of many home ties, and the girl was suffering from what a later generation would have called the "blues." Her cousin and boon companion, Madge Parkin, who was seeing her off, made gallant efforts to cheer her up. She made facetious speculations about the names on the passenger list and amongst others read: "Reverend C. W. Abel." Visualizing a curate, she said banteringly: "He is *sure* to be nice," and producing a coloured pencil from her purse she marked a circle round his name in red.

The voyage on the *Britannia* was a memorable one for Charles Abel. He was a popular figure on the ship and undertook a large part of the responsibility of providing amusement for his fellow passengers. At the same time he

was as steadfast in his Christian witness as he had been with his fellow cricketers in England and among his rough associates of the timber yards in New Zealand. He conducted daily "morning prayers" in one of the saloons and preached on Sunday. During the course of the voyage he became so well acquainted with the Moxons that a well-meaning but outspoken woman passenger, bidding Abel good-bye on the dock at Sydney, remarked: "Young man, if you are not engaged to Miss Moxon all I can say is, I hope you soon will be!"



WATER VILLAGE AT PORT MORESBY

### III

#### THE UTTERMOST PART OF THE EARTH

**I**N 1873 the British cruiser *Basilisk* steered her course through the numerous archipelagoes off the eastern end of New Guinea, or Papua, as this part of the great island is called today. Captain Moresby (later Admiral), was the first of the early explorers to record the true shape and character of the east end of this unknown land. He found a savage race inhabiting the mountainous and thickly forested mainland and the adjacent islands. No one knew from whence they had come, or how long they had lived there. Their numerous legends explained such mysteries for them as the origin of fire, and gave them the meaning of the curious designs they carved on their houses or tattooed on their bodies. A Papuan version of the story of the flood had its place in their folklore, but beyond this they had no known history. It was not easy for tradition to survive when everything that concerned a man became taboo at his death, his name unmentionable, and his fame banned from conversation.

These islands and the seaside inhabitants were a primitive people, loyal to their own particular group but passionate in their feelings towards their enemies, and cruel in paying off old scores. Although on the whole a placid people, they could on occasions be roused to a state of frenzy. When thus enraged, they would indulge in an excess of brutality and cannibalism. In those days New Guinea men never sat cross-legged on the ground as did the women. They were on the alert, and sat on their haunches, ever ready to spring to their feet in case of alarm. The chief occupation of the men seemed to consist in making spears and weapons, stockading their villages, building great war-canoes of barbaric beauty, and in similar activities of inter-tribal warfare. The women looked after the food supply

and tended the vegetable and fruit gardens in the communal clearings that appeared like squares of patchwork high up on the flanks of the hills.

The Papuans built fine houses, with towering gables and deeply curved ridges to the roofs. Competition with their enemies made these people jealous of appearances, and fostered communal pride. All their work was done with stone implements. Forests were felled and timber adzed and shaped. Elaborate carvings were executed with flakes of obsidian. Much of this fine show was a form of bravado. Men did their most daring deeds only when their faces were disguised with bright paints, and when their great mops of hair were bedecked with feathers. Behind a mask of vivid colours, red, white and black, applied in streaks, spots and scrolls, a man lost his natural self-consciousness. As individuals, these men were shy. Acting in concert, however, numbers gave them courage. The herd impulse was strong.

In those days a village was never in total darkness, as many sleeping Papuan villages are today. Fires were kept burning throughout the night. Men slept in snatches; someone always watched. Sometimes the alarm would be given—a midnight raid! The stillness of the night was suddenly broken by shrieks and yells; pandemonium reigned. A thatched house would be set on fire and columns of flame roared upwards into the black sky. The terrified inmates, flying to escape from the blaze, would be seized by the raiding party. Men rushed to the scene of disaster, yelling and whooping and brandishing their spears. Panic spread through the whole village, and the women screamed in terror. The tactics of raiders were usually to attack and run, so that the "battle" was over in a few minutes. The capture of one or two prisoners was followed by a wild rush for the war-canoes and a hot pursuit. The forest resounded with infuriated yells, roused by the victorious conch-shell blasts from the departing canoes. The whole community then abandoned itself to elaborate wailing and pledged itself to speedy vengeance.

Beating of drums and the triumphant whooping of the cap-



tors could be heard from afar as the raiders neared their own shores. Women and children of the raided village would escape to their garden camps in the hills and trembled as the din of cannibal revelry penetrated the forest to their retreat. There would always be a few hardened women present, usually vindictive relatives of earlier victims that were being avenged. These women had a prominent part to perform in the ceremonies. Their own hands must repay the spilling of their family blood. Proceedings opened with the skewering of the eyes of the bound prisoners by a woman—the supreme disgrace. She used the *sisimo*, a pronged instrument carved and devised specially for this purpose, exclaiming: "Those eyes saw my kinsman slain!" Indescribable tortures followed, calculated to insult the victim's people. Finally these cruelties culminated in the wrapping of the body, conscious or unconscious, in inflammable palm leaves for roasting amid wild acclamations, the beating of drums and the dance.

"The true food for man!" old cannibals still avow—and they add that only of human flesh can one eat to excess without unpleasant after effects. Nevertheless, the people of this eastern part of New Guinea did not eat the flesh of their enemies either for pleasure or merely for a change of diet. The feast was a religious ceremony, expressing revenge and absolving them of a duty to their wronged dead. Those who partook thereby vindicated their reputation and disgraced the tribal kindred of those who were eaten. The spirits played their part in cannibalism, as in all else in Papuan life. Sorcery, witchcraft, fear, the propitiation of departed spirits, feasts, mortuary rites and the endless ceremonies entailed—all this formed the very substance of a primitive, dark existence.

In 1871, E. B. Savage and Samuel McFarlane, two missionaries of the London Missionary Society, set sail from the Loyalty Islands in the Southern Pacific to bring the Gospel of Christ to New Guinea. They were to be pioneers in this unknown land, and from the first glimpse of the country they realized something of the magnitude of their task. They were faced by an untractable people. They soon contracted malaria



in its fiercest form, and fever took its toll of life from the start. Their hopes were checked and their efforts were repulsed. It became clear that the very first essential was to find a healthy place, free from swamps, that would serve as a centre from which they could work and to which they could flee for refuge when illness overtook them. Eventually they settled among the populated islands of the Torres Straits, which were considered healthier than the shores of New Guinea. From there they directed operations and made missionary expeditions to the mainland.

The South Sea Island helpers, who had come with them, succumbed easily to malaria. In spite of the great loss of life, there was never any lack of volunteers from Lifu (Loyalty Islands), eager to fill the gaps. These men and their wives showed great courage and devotion. Twenty years earlier cannibalism had flourished in Lifu and the children of this virile race had dedicated to God the daring that made their fathers famous. They were ready pioneers.

Later the mission forces were strengthened by the arrival of Dr. William G. Lawes from Savage Island, and James Chalmers—or "Tamate," as he had been known in Raratonga—who was already a picturesque figure in the South Seas. "A heroic card" he was dubbed by Robert Louis Stevenson.

Lifu teachers were settled at the new station at Hanuabada, in the harbour discovered by Admiral Moresby and now bearing his name. Here Lawes took up his work. But the malarial scourge continued and, at the end of two years, there were twenty graves in the little mission cemetery. Dr. Lawes declared that this was "not a fit place for Europeans to live" and, in 1875, the Directors of the London Missionary Society wrote: "We cannot help thinking that Port Moresby is a mistake."

Two years later the mate of a small shipwrecked vessel landed at Waré (Teste Island), off the eastern extremity of New Guinea. The inhabitants remembered the beads, calico and hoop-iron brought by the H.M.S. *Basilisk*, and other occasional vanguards of the new day, and were anxious to trade again with mysterious beings from the unknown. The cast-

away took up his abode on a tiny island at the mouth of a lagoon, and remained here for four months before sailing west to the Torres Straits. His reports on the unknown east end of the territory resulted in the organization of an expedition with the hopes of starting missionary work there, with Waré as "Headquarters, sanatorium and city of refuge."

The L.M.S. party traveled east as far as Suau in the mission steamer *Ellengowan*. McFarlane, with his justifiable fears, thought that the country looked "sickly" and noted the swamps wherever they attempted to land. Tamate used his dominant personality and his natural boldness in making the first contact with the people at various points, in some instances departing before the astonished Papuans had time to recover their senses or to react unfavourably.

On the second journey east a party of Lifu "teachers" was to be settled at various stations. This time they sailed as far as the island of Waré in the *Bertha*, a small boat described with feeling by the passengers as "just an old tub." She was loaded with a consignment of stores and cases of "trade." The trader-seaman who had previously camped at Waré had compiled a vocabulary of some four hundred words of the vernacular. He had given this to McFarlane, who passed the weary hours of sailing committing words to memory. When the *Bertha* arrived at her destination he was thus able to repeat a few words and to call for the chief by name. The natives were impressed by the results of this painstaking effort and swarmed round the little vessel in their outriggered catamarans.

When the missionaries landed they tried to explain to the people the peaceful object of their visit. They made the sign of friendship and the whole community solemnly responded to this gesture. McFarlane wrote:

Every man held his nose between the finger and thumb of one hand and probed his abdomen with the forefinger of the other. They also pointed to the human skulls hanging about their doors and gables and gave us to understand that these were enemies whom they were in the habit of killing and eating, but that we were friends.

The people brought fruit and native vegetables to trade for beads, red calico and hoop-iron, which they would cut up, sharpen and use as knives. On Sunday the missionaries hoisted a little flag to the mast, and told the people that this was a sign that the day was sacred and there would be no bartering. The same afternoon the people returned in their canoes to inquire whether the strange *tabu* was still on. The trade was so successful that considerable rivalry arose between the villages, and the missionaries eventually found themselves in the centre of an angry skirmish. Spears were soon flying across the decks of their little vessel as two conflicting groups fought for a monopoly of the white man's favour.

One or two stations were formed in this easternmost district, and Lifu teachers were left in charge at each place. In dedicating the teachers to their new spheres of work, McFarlane gathered the people at each place and addressed them in the few words and phrases at his disposal. He told them that fighting was bad, and that these were days for friendship. Usually his words were vociferously approved by his audience. He wrote: "When I spoke of there being no more fighting their loud and unanimous consent might have led a stranger to suppose that they were all rigid members of the Peace Society!"

The next attempt to establish work was in the China Straits, on the island of Logea. Here the people were undemonstrative, suspicious and unlike the people of Waré, who had a friendly eye to business. When McFarlane inducted a teacher at this place by far the most interesting character at Logea watched the proceedings from a hiding place in the thick jungle. Dilomi was in disgrace. His name was feared among his enemies, but now he had offended his own people, for he had waylaid and killed a man who was a guest at one of their villages. Even Dilomi's friends were incensed by this incriminating breach of hospitality. Blood must compensate for blood, so Dilomi had taken to the hills. He could not leave the island of Logea, for his prowess as a fighter had brought him many sworn enemies, and he was feared and hated. He wore two white cowries hanging to his necklet—a distinction his cannibal propensities

had earned him—and he wore this ornament with pride. This man's whole influence was later on to be used for Christ.

The missionaries were greatly impressed with the scenic beauty of Eastern New Guinea. Entering Milne Bay on a clear, calm day, McFarlane wrote enthusiastically of the mountains, the green forests, white beaches and coconut groves. "Like paradise," was his comment when they circled into the little bay at Wagawaga. Samarai, a small island in the China Straits, was chosen as head-station and "city of refuge," with the hope that its isolated position would make it safer and more healthy than the other mission footholds.

After their tour of investigation the party returned to Torres Straits, leaving the South Sea Island teachers and their wives to carry on a hazardous task. They must win the friendship of an impulsive, primitive people before they could give their Gospel message. They must battle against malaria that drained their energy and weakened their moral courage. They were left unvisited for long periods by their white leaders; and they were themselves only ignorant men and women but recently removed from savagery. It is small wonder there were tragedies among these simple but brave-hearted people who had left their homes to proclaim Christ in a heathen country.

In 1884 a British protectorate was established over New Guinea. Five men-o-war lay at anchor in Port Moresby harbour on the sixth of November, when the Union Jack was hoisted from the mission flagstaff and salutes were fired from the warship. The formal proclamation was read in the presence of the leading men from the neighbouring villages and as many local inhabitants as curiosity could bring together. Unfortunately, similar ceremonies had twice been enacted within two years and had not been ratified, so that the glamour of the occasion was somewhat impaired for the mystified onlookers. Commodore Erskine, Captain of the H.M.S. *Nelson*, and Commodore of the Australian Station, read the declaration. It was translated to the people "in the name of Her Most Gracious Majesty," and stated that their liberties and lands were from henceforth to be under the protection of the great white Queen,

whose servants would endeavour to prevent and forestall all injustice and unlawful strife. Commodore Erskine ordered the ship's band ashore and a recital was given for the benefit of the natives. But people whose sole instrument of music was the drum were not to be lured even by the band from the flagship. They were plainly not interested in what was to them merely an uncomprehended volume of noise. They were becoming rather indifferent to the white man's pomps and ceremonies, and Dr. Lawes, the missionary at Port Moresby, had great difficulty in beating up an audience. A display of fireworks in the evening, however, succeeded in striking awe into their minds.

Sir Peter Scratchley, who was appointed special Commissioner, died of malaria on board his vessel after a brief three months' patrol of the country. Four years later (1888) New Guinea, as it was still called, was created a British possession, with Sir William MacGregor, late High Commissioner of the Western Pacific, as the first Administrator.

White men of many nationalities were now beginning to find their way to this new country. Gambling with life, and far away from the civilized haunts of his race, one trader traveled as far east as the China Straits, and settled on a small island named Kwato, lying close to the larger island of Logea. Hoping to cultivate friendly business relations with his neighbours, he built a thatched palm hut on the white coral beach and opened his little store of cheap trade goods. But his dark-skinned neighbours on the opposite shore resented his presence on their island. One evening they clubbed him, looted his store, and left him lying dead in his hut. Ah Gim, a Chinaman who succeeded him in business at Kwato, suffered the same fate.

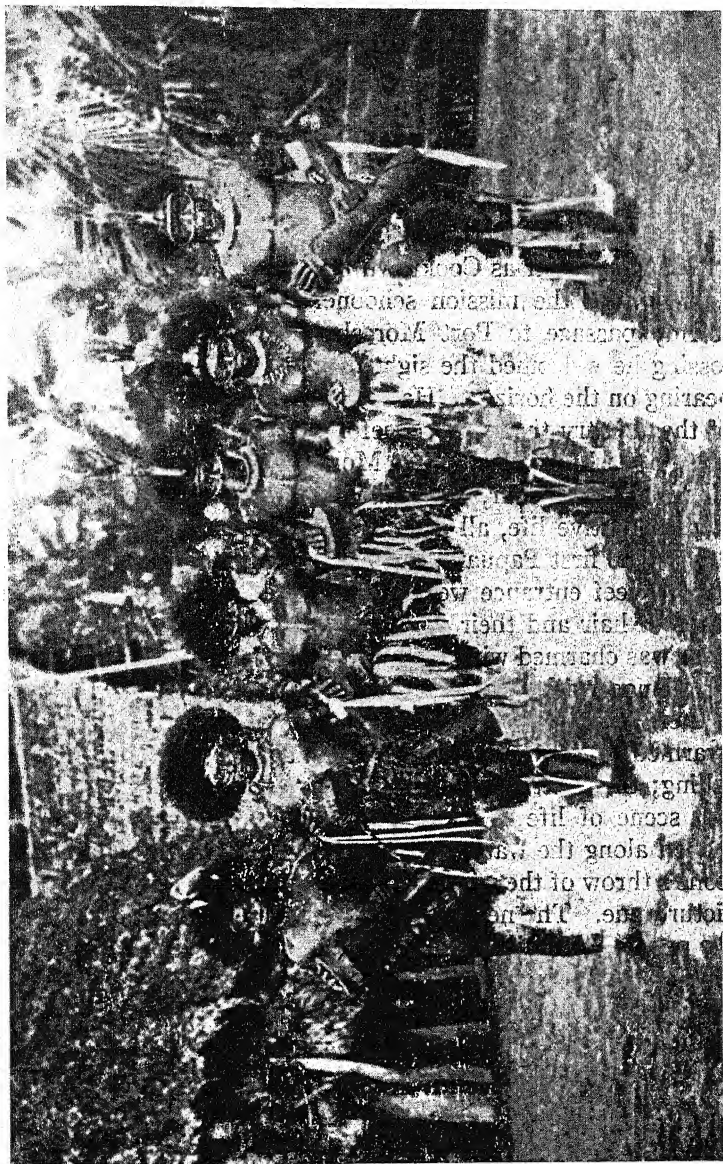
## IV

### FIRST CONTACTS WITH THE PAPUANS

CHARLES ABEL left Sydney to take up his work in New Guinea in October, 1890. A coastal steamer brought him as far as Port Moresby in North Queensland, where he waited until the steamer *Harrier* gave him such a stormy ride to Port Moresby that after several days of waiting he was disappointed of a line of blue mountains appearing on the horizon. He was captivated by his first glimpse of the country that was henceforth to be his home. The contour of the hills around Port Moresby, the limpid water of the land-locked harbour, the thatched marine villages with their teeming native life, the combined to present a fascinating picture. The Papuans he encountered in their canoes at the narrow river mouths were grotesque enough, with their huge mops of hair and faces smeared with paint. Abel, however, was struck with every strange new sight and sound: the long canoes with their towering claw-shaped sails; the men and women with coppery brown bodies; the naked children that swarmed around the newcomer, the hubbub of voices rising and falling, the chatter in flowing, euphonic vernacular; the everyday life in the brown Hanuabada villages that extended to the water's edge. The Papuan pageant within a stone's throw of the mission was both interesting and extremely picturesque. The new missionary took an immediate liking to the people. Primitive and degraded they were, yet full of ingenuity, as their material culture revealed, and they lived a life far from lacking in colour and grace.

Dr. and Mrs. W. G. Lawes, missionaries of the London Missionary Society's vanguard in New Guinea, were at this time stationed at Port Moresby. There was a large and flourishing school of which Abel took charge, directing all his energies to





PRIMITIVE PAPUANS FROM THE INTERIOR. DRESSED FOR A DANCE.

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making friends with the young people, and to learn. He soon found that Papuan children knew no such parental restraint or authority. They lived a free life. They were not compelled to attend school. Their parents used to demand payment for allowing the missionaries to bind up their wounds. Naturally, attendance at school was entirely a matter of free will; regular attendance depended upon the teacher's ability to make education sufficiently interesting and exciting. Abel endeavoured to do this by creating a keen interest in sports. Children being strangely akin the world over, it was not surprising that the new missionary soon became popular with the rising generation.

In addition to elementary subjects it was even more necessary to teach obedience and discipline: two important factors entirely unknown in the drifting everyday life of the Papuan. "Children in the villages are allowed to grow up like weeds," Abel observed. "The mere discipline of having to come regularly to school, to begin and finish and sit and stand in class when told to do so, are very healthy and necessary exercises for youngsters like Papuans who are so absolutely independent of all authority in their village life." Strenuous physical drill proved the most effective means of teaching self-control and prompt obedience. Abel had a deeply ingrained aversion to anything slipshod and disorderly. He determined that his pupils should learn to share his love of order, and he set out to cultivate a degree of smartness in the boys and girls. From the very beginning he felt the importance of this work and could not help contrasting these youngsters, full of brightness and hopefulness, with their hard-faced elders. "I have sometimes wondered," he wrote, "whether the rising generation is as superior to the one dying out as it appears to be, or whether it can be possible for the children I see around me every day to develop in a few years into men like their fathers."

At this time James Chalmers, or "Tamate," as the famous pioneer was better known throughout the Pacific, was engaged in opening up new work along the Papuan coast. Attempts on the part of the committee on the field to regulate his sphere of

service had failed. Tamate had his own special work to do, and he went about doing it. "I like authorities," he confided in a letter to the new missionary, "but we don't get on well together. We clash too often, and they are so often wrong, at all events they don't agree with *me!*"

Tamate took a liking to the new missionary. The two men were in some respects akin and, as time was to prove, were both in their different spheres adventurers upon new and untried ways. Periodically, at Tamate's request, Abel left his work at Port Moresby to accompany the older missionary on his journeys, and later, when Chalmers was on furlough in Australia, took charge of his headquarters at Motumotu.

Tamate's first aim in entering a new district was always to make friends with the natives. If they had either never seen a white man before, or were still unused to the strange phenomenon, he would pay them a series of short visits, leave presents, and so would accustom them to his presence. It would dawn on them, without any aid of words, that the strange visitors were not only unarmed but that their intentions were kindly. Tamate was an expert in hazards and, with his long experience, was quick to sense any feeling of hostility. He seemed to know by intuition exactly how long natives would be likely to tolerate his intrusion, or the right moment for him to forestall their reaction by putting himself out of range of their spears.

On one occasion, not far from the spot where the veteran missionary eventually met his violent death, Tamate and Abel were surrounded on the beach by armed natives, who were having their first contact with white men, and were bewildered and mute with surprise. Tamate addressed a few words to their chief through an interpreter, offered a single sentence of prayer and, recognizing that their mood was menacing, he intimated to his companion that they must clear out as quickly and as quietly as possible. They succeeded in boarding their canoe and reached the mission schooner in safety. By the time they were putting out to sea the Papuans were infuriated and were quarrelling among themselves. In some of these adventures

fearlessness and prompt action were required and, above all, a real confidence in God. "A position of extreme danger for Christ's sake make the promises of God living things," was Abel's testimony.

Everywhere the missionary went, even where he was not regarded with hostility, he was still an unfamiliar object. Curious crowds would gather to examine the stranger, exclaiming at the texture of his clothes, and falling back in alarm when he threw off a boot. Often Abel used to seat himself on the platform of a chief's house while an interested audience would stand agape and watch his every movement. Usually some man in his party was known to the spectators, and the missionary would hear this man, acting as showman, lecturing on him in an unknown tongue, drawing attention to the various peculiarities of the white race that appear most extraordinary to the Papuan. Bolder members of the audience would attempt to investigate, to Abel's great inconvenience, how far the colour of his face extended beneath his clothing, which they thought to be his outer skins, while every action would bring forth a fresh burst of surprise.

To bring an article out of your pocket (Abel wrote) is to perform a miracle in the eyes of men whose only clothing is coconut oil. If you take off a boot, they jump to the conclusion that you have detachable feet; should you remove your sock, you have for certain the power to cast your skin!

It did not take long for coastal Papuans to become accustomed to the presence of white men in their country. Naturally there were clashes in those early days, and occasional outbursts of violence. But murders were not by any means confined to resentful Papuans. The number of white men was increasing each year. The Government was establishing its sway, and commerce and Christian enterprise were making inroads into the life of the people. The white man not only came to be regarded as inevitable but was sometimes welcomed for the very tangible material advantages that he brought with him. As the novelty of the *dimdim* (white man) and his ways began to wear

off, a dispirited lack of interest sometimes took the place of eager curiosity. "The Papuan is a man of extremes in nearly everything," Abel wrote after a cold reception. "He is either full of hustling eagerness to see a match struck, or he treats the fire-maker with complete indifference."

The first year in New Guinea brought a great variety of experience, and revealed the Papuan in many moods. Abel had in many cases been accepted as a friend by these people, and at other times had been warned off as an enemy. On one of the latter occasions he had been camping at a village near Orokolo, in the Gulf of Papua, waiting for the mission schooner *Mary* to pick him up. He found himself in a tight corner, for the resentment of the people against his presence grew into loud-voiced indignation when they realized he was defenceless and entirely at their mercy. The *Mary* had been completely put out of action by a gale further up the coast and, as he waited, Abel saw how hopeless his position might be with contagious animosity running high. There was no time to lose. With his usual resourcefulness he gathered the village children together and at once began to teach them how to play cricket and football. Here was something new for Orokolo. The children were fascinated and gave their whole-hearted approval to the white man's sport. The play relieved the tension considerably and soon the older people began to gather round, intrigued by the strange new games. Finally, whatever the sentiments of their elders might have been, the children made fast friends with the white stranger. Hostility gave way to curiosity, the truculent attitude disappeared, and the danger passed.

Papuan savages seldom made an attack when the chances of victory were equal. Their most daring deeds were done when they were confident that their opponents were being taken unawares, were undefended, or vastly outnumbered. On another occasion, when travelling in the Gulf of Papua, Abel reached his camp on the Annie River in the middle of a fierce conflict between two villages on opposite banks. Notwithstanding all the excitement and clamour, only five men were killed and a dozen or so wounded. Abel was merely a spectator and en-

tirely outside the picture. He attended to the casualties on his side of the river, but could persuade no one to paddle him across to the opposite bank, even though the enemy's village was half a mile further up.

Of Papuan warfare, an inappropriate name he admitted to apply to any of their combats, Abel wrote:

The Papuan squabbles, but he does not often fight. He will not fight when the chances for and against him are equal. Then fear controls him, and his fury expends itself in clamour. His worst passions are not aroused until he sees a chance of gratifying them at little or no risk to his own person. He fights in the dark. He takes a village by surprise. He makes a few captives and slips away with his stolen prize. He returns home to gloat over his prey, and then you see him at his worst. . . . He is an assassin, seldom a warrior.

A typical instance of a native skirmish occurred once at Hanuabada, near Port Moresby. H. M. Dauncey, who was then in charge, was away, and Abel was living there alone. He describes the scene:

About nine o'clock one evening the most bewildering hubbub arose on the beach, and in the moonlight I could see from the verandah men and women flying to the scene of action, evidently bent upon bloodshed. As the numbers increased, the commotion became more boisterous. I was new to my work. I did not know exactly what to do. One of the boys came panting up to me and reported first-hand from the seat of war. It was a terrible affair, according to Noho. One man had been killed. Others were being killed. Now my duty was clear. I ran to my medicine-chest and provided myself with sufficient antiseptic lint and strapping to bind the wounds of a defeated and distressed army!

I ran down with the boys at my heels. In a few minutes I was on the outskirts of a fight. The din and clatter at close quarters was deafening. The clashing of clubs, and the clamour of the multitude, were enough to send a cold chill to your heart. I was not used to the scenes of active warfare, but I had my duty to discharge. Where was the dead man? I met

one of my pupils and enquired of him. He was so excited he could hardly be brought to reason. At length, having spoken to him as though he were misbehaving in school, I got him to lead the way. He took me along the outskirts of the fight, through one native house, along a platform, and into another. You could go no further, unless you fell into the sea. The village was built over the tideway. Beyond was the Pacific Ocean. It was no use trusting to a child whose brain was turned by excitement. I addressed myself to a sober-looking man who was sitting on the platform near where I stood.

"Where is the dead man?" I asked breathlessly.

"I'm he," he answer dolefully.

He certainly had a nasty scalp wound which had doubtless knocked him down. But after it had been dressed two or three times I found that he was fit for active service again.

A great deal of experience was crowded into Abel's first year in the country. The end of that time found him practically living on board the newly-acquired fifteen-ton ketch *Niué*, travelling along the coast and through the Torres Straits. "I am afraid I am more than a year older than when I arrived," he wrote. "I have had fever many times. This is a bad climate. The strongest have to feel it at first."

In July of 1891 Abel left Port Moresby to take up work with F. W. Walker in the Eastern Division of New Guinea. The *Niué*, the gift of the Christians at Niué in the Loyalty Islands, was put at their disposal and was a great acquisition. The idea of a small fifteen-tonner for use in open seas did not sound so well in London as it did in New Guinea, where one might be thankful to importune any passing whaleboat or dugout canoe for a lift. "I sincerely hope she will prove a boon and not too great a risk," wrote Dr. Wardlaw Thompson, secretary of the London Missionary Society. "She must be a lively craft in bad weather."

Walker had already surveyed the district, and was camping at Suau, an island narrowly separated from the south shore of the mainland, some twenty miles west of Samarai. It was a populous centre, and the people were superior to most of the

racers inhabiting the country, in appearance, intelligence and in art. Here the first soil had already been broken by Tamate, who had once been captured by this very people. For a night and a day he had been held prisoner at Suau village, his life being spared from hour to hour only because of a sharp wrangle as to who had the right to kill the stranger and claim his body as a prize. People from the adjacent island and mainland had come in their canoes to participate in the excitement and to share in the spoils and in the impending feast. The fierce dispute that arose was the means of saving Tamate's life, and he afterwards not only became their friend but dominated them with the strange power, almost of fascination, that he exerted over primitive people. Abel once asked Manurewa, the chief at Suau:

"Why did you give up man-eating?"

"Tamate said, 'You must give up man-eating,' and we did," was the old man's cryptic explanation.

Sailing up the Suau passage in the *Nimé* for the first time, Abel was charmed by the passing scenes. The hills rising on both sides were clothed with virgin forest. There were white sandy beaches, and brown villages tucked in amongst the palm-trees that fringed the shores. As they sailed over shallow reefs, branching forests of many delicate shades of coral could be seen through the clear water. The Suau men and women whom they saw on fishing rafts and outriggers were, on the whole, a small people, lithe and proportioned. The men wore the usual large, teased-out mops of hair and their entire clothing consisted of the leaf band. The women wore heavy grass skirts, made of palm leaf, and hanging like crinolines. They were also decorated with the fine tattooing which covered their faces and bodies like a lacy veil. They were placid-looking people, often with quite an aristocratic expression on their faces.

The little sago-thatched mission house was in the care of a South Sea Island teacher and his wife from Raratonga. As the *Nimé* came within easy call of Suau point, preparing to veer round once more for the last tack to windward, the native captain shouted to the teacher on shore: "*Sikata au riga!*" ("Boil



the kettle"). This was the first Suau sentence that Abel heard. As the *Niné* came riding into the anchorage the hungry travelers were welcomed by Walker, the teacher and his wife, and the little group of children that had voluntarily attached themselves to the station. Here they found a meal spread ready for them by their Raratongan hostess.

The mission camp at Suau soon became a rendezvous of children and young people, attracted by the novelty of many things new and strange. Even the bare pots and pans that hung in the improvised kitchen were objects of wonder in their eyes. The vigorous life on the station, with schools and organized sports, was a contrast to the monotony of their villages. They were bright children and the new missionaries had only to look at them to grow hopeful about the future. "Frank, confiding, affectionate, impressionable and pliable as clay," Abel described them. "Merry boys and girls, full of the inevitable spirit which belongs to the young, but close contact with them makes one conscious that they lack innocence. The clear radiance is never in their eyes; the brightest sunshine is never in their laughter."

The need of these children was a great challenge. Abel realized that the conditions in which they were being brought up denied to them the chance to grow normally in character and health of mind. They were forced into customs that were degrading, and often, as he later learned from their own confession, were led into vicious ways by their own mothers. But they were responsive and quick to learn. The young missionary began to learn their language by the surest of methods, that of playing with the children. In their friendly chatter they unconsciously gave him valuable glimpses into their own lives.

Abel was appalled by the utter unconcern of Papuan parents for the welfare of their own children.

It seems a terrible thing to say of any human beings (he wrote), but it seems true of these people among whom I live, that they do not know what love is. . . . I know of no animal, except perhaps the duck, which is more careless in attending to

its young than the average Papuan mother. How many of them survive infancy is a marvel. I do not mean that there is no kindness shown by mothers to their children. I mean their interest never rises to what we know as love. It is a mere animal propensity compared with the love that reigns in a Christian mother's heart.

Some of the heathen practices were not only cruel, but were terrifying to children. Grim fear of spirits kept them in mortal dread of the unseen. "Our fathers did these things, and we do them," was the only reason that could be extracted to explain the tyranny of some of their customs. "Bitter tears are of no avail," Abel wrote; "trembling agitated little bodies make no appeal to the mother's heart. The Papuan mother regards the most revolting cruelty as necessary, because it is the custom to practise it. Custom here is stronger than natural affection."

Little boys were allowed unrestricted freedom. "Add to lack of discipline the fact that the child gains his knowledge from what he hears and sees where license is unbridled, and the result is a savage." Little girls, however, were obliged to toe the mark to heathen conventions. At a very early age they were subjected to the painful process of tattooing. The child would be pinioned by her aunts and, with the aid of a sharp thorn and coconut-shell full of sooty pigment, they would puncture the design that, little by little, would cover her from head to foot by the time she was twelve.

Among those who used to frequent the mission compound was a small boy, about ten years old, named Lebasi. He had been abandoned by his mother when he was very young, and had been found on a river bank. One and another had cared for him spasmodically, and somehow or other he had survived their care. Early privations, however, had left their mark upon him, so that he was rather undersized and unlike other Papuan children, with their fine free bodies, he stooped. Lebasi had an unusually serious face that occasionally would light up with a wonderful smile. Abel was immediately attracted, thinking that a boy with such a smile must have something worthwhile in him. It was recommendation enough, so Lebasi was taken

on as a cook-boy and general factotum. He was nicknamed Jo, and later became Josia.

One evening a falling cocoanut struck Jo and knocked him senseless. Efforts to revive him were quite unsuccessful. Next morning Abel's first thought was of Jo, and, rising very early, he went to the place where the boy had lain. Jo was missing. Abel searched for him everywhere, and at last, going into the cook-house, he found Jo calmly attending to his duties as though nothing had happened. For twenty-four years Abel and Jo were to work together. Looking back and recalling Jo's part in the unfolding story of Kwato, Abel used to declare that but for this lad that story might never have been.

When Abel returned for a time to the west of New Guinea, Jo was his companion during an eight-day voyage on a large native *lakatoi*, or sailing canoe. This was one of the strangest sea voyages that Abel ever made. He was once more at Motu-motu, which had been one of Tamate's many outposts, and was waiting for the *Harrier* to pick him up on her way back from the Torres Straits and bring him a hundred and twenty miles east to Port Moresby. But a severe gale had so damaged the *Harrier* that she had to make for Australia for repairs, and in the meantime Abel waited for weeks, hoping each day that some means of conveyance would appear on the horizon to his rescue. At last he learned accidentally that nine large *lakatoi* were about to sail for Port Moresby. Fearing that he might ask a passage, the Papuan navigators had tried to keep their plans secret. However, an old man in the village had relatives who were travelling, and promised for Tamate's sake to use his influence to secure a passage for Abel. There was strong opposition to the idea of a white man accompanying the party and the general feeling was made clear to Abel with the utmost politeness, the spokesman disassociating himself entirely from the objections. Abel, not yet knowing Papuans well, thought they were extremely kind. First they pointed out that their accommodation was not good enough for a white man; nor could they give him the kind of food that would satisfy him. These obstacles were easily waved aside. Abel was prepared

to camp anywhere, would bring his own food, and seemed quite unmoved by the shame they professed at being unable to give him accommodation befitting to his colour. Even the objections that they quoted as the views of the rest of the party did not dissuade the white man. After a great deal of palaver Abel discovered that the whole question was a matter of the safety of the voyage. They must pass hostile shores. They were dependent upon fair weather. All these things were in the power of the spirits. Even the very masts had to be charmed. "*They*," said his informant, with a gesture that placed the onus on the others, "are afraid that your presence will interfere with the sorcerer's work." Finally, after a solemn contract had been made not to interfere, a passage was reluctantly granted.

Camped in one of the after-shelters, Abel was one of forty-three men and women travelling on the large unwieldy native barge. There were five masts, an immense one amidships carrying a tremendous claw-shaped sail of matting. The six huge dugouts, lashed together to make up the hull, were loaded with rancid sago. For eight days the monotonous beating of drums never ceased as the sorcerer, a little wizened old man, did his work close to the spot where Abel had his quarters. The sorcery consisted chiefly in burning leaves and bark produced from a little plaited basket, and calculated to scare off the most malignant spirits. The women painted themselves bright red. All day two or three men in a prominent position in the bow swayed their bodies, and went into unending rhythmic contortions. Abel's Suau vocabulary was still too sparse to enable him to attempt more than the barest conversations with Jo. However, he studied the people whose everyday life he was sharing, and he learned much. "In the presence of all this fear and restlessness on the part of these people," he wrote, "I praised God for our deliverance from such bondage, and for the peace of mind our faith in Him secures."

The most trying part of the experience was when the breeze dropped and they lay becalmed for the best part of a day, in the sweltering heat, without a breath of air.

The fetid odours of that reeking vessel were terrible under the sultry rays of the tropical sun. . . . Four or five drummers, relieved from time to time as they grew weary by other members of the crew, stood upon the roof of my house aft. They never once stopped playing their monotonous tune. Night and day they kept it going, until all other discomforts—the irritating old sorcerer and the increasingly bad smell from the sago included—became mere trifles. On the housetop for'ard three men usually stood throwing their arms above their heads, and twisting their bodies into grotesque attitudes. All this was the real navigation. It was the nasty odour from the smouldering bark, the perpetual beating of their monotonous drums, the ceaseless contortions of these naked savages for'ard, which secured to us the weather we wanted to take us on our way in safety!

Abel kept his part of the contract and was treated by all with respect and kindness. At one point where they landed for a night he was settling down to a meal ashore, which consisted of his last tin of bloaters and a native sago ball, when the man who, if it were not for his subordination to the sorcerer might be called the captain of the *lakatoi*, brought a lizard over two feet long, roasted whole, and laid its charred body on a rock on which his passenger's supper had been spread. Abel thanked him warmly for this hideous item to his bill of fare. "Jo came up afterwards," he wrote, referring to the incident, "looking very indignant, and flung the swollen reptile away. . . . He ate it himself afterwards. He ate the bloaters as well, and the sago cake. My appetite had been killed with kindness."

## V

### FOUNDING A NEW STATION

**W**HEN the British New Guinea Government decided to establish a station in the Eastern Division of the country, the only land available was the island of Kwato in the China Straits. The first impulse of those who visited this island was to leave it immediately, because the vast, evil-smelling swamp on the foreshore spelled disaster. Finally, in 1888, they entered upon negotiations with the mission to exchange Kwato for their property on the neighbouring island of Samarai. Less isolated and nearer to native settlements, the latter, they felt, might be more suitable for mission purposes. This was agreed upon, though the mission was inclined to regard the whole affair as a bad bargain.

First missionary efforts in this part of the country had more than failed. The last remaining South Sea Island teacher had been implicated in a big local quarrel. A gang of wild Tavara men, on their way home from working for him at Samarai, raided a village called Goilavaiavaiao, captured two women, and took them home and ate them. The men of Logea, allies of Goilavaiavaiao, were up in arms, led by Dilomi, who was their biggest landowner. The teacher himself was so moved with indignation at all that had transpired, that he boarded one of the big fighting canoes and accompanied the punitive party, armed with an old rusty muzzle-loader. He had neither powder nor shot with him, for his intention was not to fight, but merely to intimidate the people who had committed the outrage. The rest of his party put such superstitious faith in the blunderbuss and its alleged powers that they evidently did not give the usual amount of caution to their strategy. Too late, the teacher saw his mistake. His mere armed presence did not

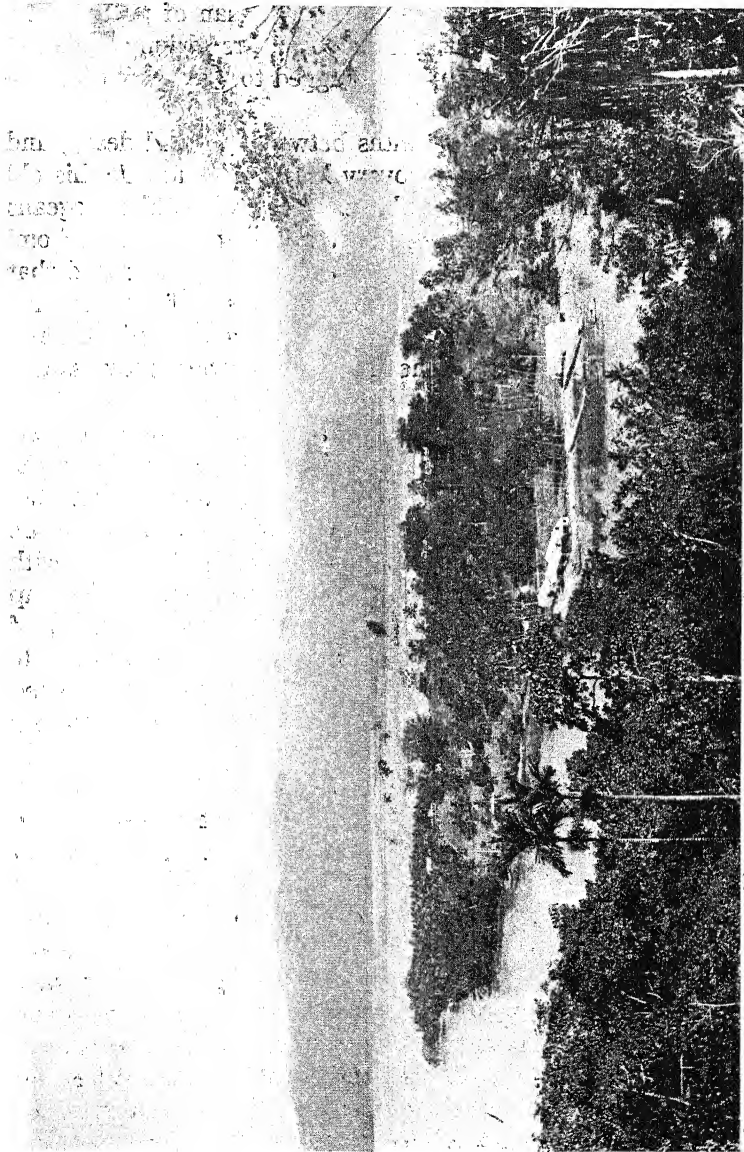
terrify the enemy. It had the reverse effect when they realized that Logea's chief warrior was a dummy man of peace. The Tara men swooped down upon the invaders, driving them off to sea. Dilomi, the leader, was dragged into his canoe with five spears hanging to his body.

Dilomi hung for many months between life and death, and in the interval before his recovery he came to forsake his old life for the new Way of Christ. Meanwhile the Logea waited for their leader to organize a fresh expedition. Dilomi knew that the time had come to break with the past, and that this would never be done until someone was willing to forgive the debt. He faced the contempt, both of friends and enemies, and chose to be that one. The blood debt of the Goilavaiavaiao women remains unpaid to this day.

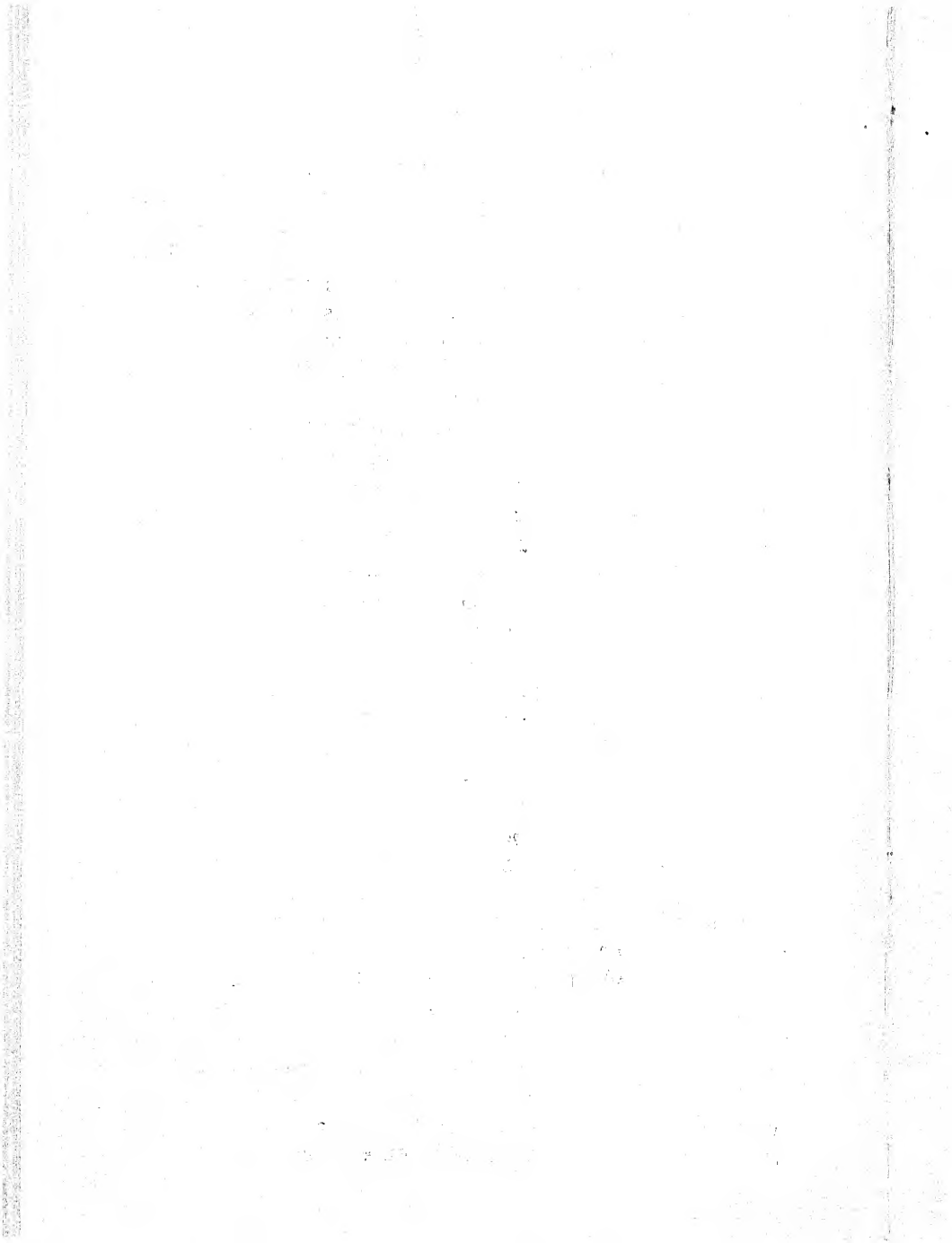
When F. W. Walker first landed at Kwato, unlike everyone else who had been there, he immediately fell in love with the place. He saw visions of what the island might one day become, and so overwhelmed was he with its advantages that he plunged right into the swamp and swam across it. Black with slime, he climbed out on the other side and made his way through the thick bush to explore the hills. The suitability of Kwato for a head-station seized him like an inspiration. He returned to Suau full of the discovery and, when Abel joined him, insisted that they must lose no time, but must set out immediately to visit the new island.

Walker's enthusiasm was so contagious that Abel also saw the island as his colleague had pictured it to him, rather than as it really was—a desolate place at which others had merely glanced and then run away. The two missionaries hacked their way up through the tangled forest on the hillside, and looked out upon enchanting views of surrounding islands, mountains and narrow straits. There was a perfect anchorage in the water that ran between Kwato and the adjacent island of Logea. They thought that the swamp could be reclaimed, without quite realizing all that this would mean. Whenever Abel had a site to choose for a station the first essential he always looked for was available space for a cricket pitch. Al-





THE ISLAND OF KWATO FROM LOGEA—VIEW OF MAINLAND OF PAPUA IN THE DISTANCE.



ready he was playing imaginary cricket over the stagnant and malodorous swamp.

Abel and Walker, both men of prompt action, decided to take time by the forelock, and prepared to establish their headquarters at Kwato without delay. They arrived there on the 8th of August, 1891, with the entire mission colony from Suau, and with the *Niué* and a whaleboat laden with their belongings. They planned to start building operation immediately. As soon as they were housed they were to turn their attention to the swamp. They camped in a little dilapidated store on the beach that a trader, afterwards murdered, had built a few years before. Rough sheds were hastily put up and thatched for their followers, and none too soon, for scarcely were they settled when down came the rain, and continued for weeks.

For three months almost continual downpour annihilated all hope of building. Sometimes the entire landscape was obliterated, and Abel wrote: "I cannot even see the tall coconut trees across the water. The atmosphere is damp. Clothes, exposed for a few hours, are too damp to put on."

In the meantime Walker travelled round the district in the *Niué*, while Abel spent his days in the gloomy patched-up shed, working all day at the Suau language by the light of a hurricane lamp. His boys would gather round him and recite their legends while he made great efforts to follow all that they were saying, eagerly noting every new word. Thus he was gaining, through Papuan mythology, a rare insight into their minds as well as an increasing knowledge of their language. At regular intervals he was laid low with bouts of malarial fever, which left him feeling limp and depressed and wondering whether his high hopes for Kwato would ever be fulfilled.

At last, towards the end of October, the rains passed, and all hands set to work clearing sites and felling timber for the new houses. It was impossible to employ local labour, for the people around them were so engrossed in special feasting ceremonies that they had no time to spare for their new *dimdim* neighbours. The feasts were drawing people from far and near. Canoeloads of men and women, and pigs bound to

poles, kept arriving all day. Night after night the incessant beating of drums would accompany ceremonies almost until morning.

Finally Walker succeeded in enlisting a large contingent of workers from Orangerie Bay, some ninety miles west of Kwato, and with their arrival, in a fleet of large sailing canoes, work went on apace. The strictest unceasing supervision was necessary. Given the smallest opportunity, the entire gang would lay down tools, clear off to the nearest shady tree, and snatch a brief siesta. Even their own mission boys would drop to their haunches and squat idly on the ground as soon as the missionaries turned their backs. Fortunately, there was a Raratongan teacher, Ono, a Cook Islander, who was a giant for work, and the very sight of whose inexhaustible energy used to act as a tonic upon Abel. He admired all Raratongans for Ono's sake.

Gradually, at first, the rough-hewn frames of the new buildings took form. Sago-bark walls quickly clothed the skeleton houses; roofs were thatched, and with their big crowd working at high pressure great progress was made, beyond their highest expectations. There was a church capable of accommodating three hundred people; a comfortable, native-built mission house, with a verandah all around it; and houses for Papuan students. On Christmas Eve, 1891, Fred Walker and Charles Abel took up their abode in their new quarters, and celebrated the event by joyfully pulling down and burning all the old shanties.

On Christmas morning they looked out upon a new settlement, and praised God for all His goodness. They spent the day organizing sports among the people, "trying to make friends with them and to break the ice; not an apt metaphor for a tropical country!" Abel wrote. All enjoyed the luxury of a well-earned holiday and the satisfaction they found in viewing the work of their hands.

The first few months at Kwato, filled with continuous manual labour, were extremely unlike the usual idea of a missionary's life. Yet Abel believed that all this work had its message for the people around him.

I must confess (he wrote), in appearance we are not always a credit to our supporters. We have come first and foremost to preach the living Christ to these wild people. But we must not stop at preaching. I do not know that anything we say on Sundays, however closely followed, would teach a man how to let stagnant water escape from the back of a settlement, or how to construct healthy and decent houses.

As for the swamp, Abel and Walker looked forward so enthusiastically to the day when hard ground should take its place that they almost lost sight of this unpleasant blight upon the island. Although, as Abel wrote, "the smell was there, as before, and was not so easily spirited away." With a spell of dry weather, and the arrival of a great fleet of canoes bringing a new gang of workers, no time was lost in getting to work. They blasted away a hill and load after load of earth was swallowed up by the swamp. Stone, sand and loam all disappeared with no apparent lessening of its capacity. Thus the work went on for months. Enthusiasm was not so effortless as it had been at first. Abel wrote to his friends: "If I had spent half the time getting practical knowledge of draining and farming and carpentering that I spent on Hebrew and theology, I could have put it to good use out here."

One day the gang of two hundred Papuan labourers struck. "Civilization is dawning!" was Abel's comment. It transpired that the imported workmen had been told by local inhabitants that a large serpent lived at the bottom of the swamp, and swallowed up all the sand and earth that was thrown in. It would merely be a matter of time, the unsuspecting workers were told, before the enraged monster would rear its head from its slimy habitat and engulf them, too!

Abel appealed to his own boys to stand by him, and they did. Loyally, and for his sake entirely, they went at their work with a will, though it seemed a hopeless proposition with the tiny handful of workers left to battle with it. "We are laying the foundations of character," wrote their leader, "while we lay the foundations of a large model village upon the swamp. . . . the work is moral as well as manual."

The fight was long, and the victory that was won at last was a double one. "As for the snake scare, we lived it out," Abel wrote later on. "Our own children impliedly trusted and disbelieved the story in the face of public opinion." Abel could not over-estimate the importance of this struggle and its results in the building up of Kwato. As a result, it had inaugurated the work of "making the children of the large and naturally indolent savages, keen and happy workers." The future life and discipline of the station grew out of this experience and was largely based upon the lessons it had taught them. Of the boys and girls that had followed them to Kwato, and of whom they were beginning to hope great things, Abel wrote:

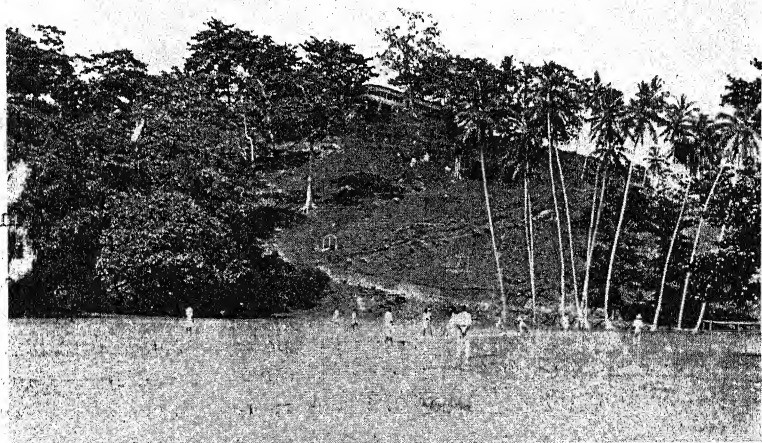
We were aiming at a much higher attainment than our young people could understand, and it was obviously impossible to explain this to them. We were experimenting with our little community; as they passed through ordeals, chafed under restriction which was so new to them, overcame temptations to shirk their duty, braced themselves to be obedient to laws which were irksome, we often watched the result with painful anxiety.

After two years of hard work, when the last loads had been thrown onto the reclaimed ground, flags were hoisted and a public holiday was proclaimed amidst great rejoicings. "It was not so much the joy of a well-earned rest," wrote Abel; "it was the gratification of conquest."

The new neighbours were more difficult to get on with than the easy-mannered Suau folk had been. The people at Logea, the large island adjacent to Kwato, had at one time been regarded by Sir William MacGregor, the first Lieutenant-Governor, as among the most difficult people with whom he had had to deal. Fortified with boldly-painted faces, and with a skull impaled on a stick at the prows of their outriggered canoes, they soon began to come across the channel and visit the *dimdim*. Each evening at sundown the drums would begin to play; their monotonous beat could be heard across the water until far into the night. The chief sports of these people were dancing and



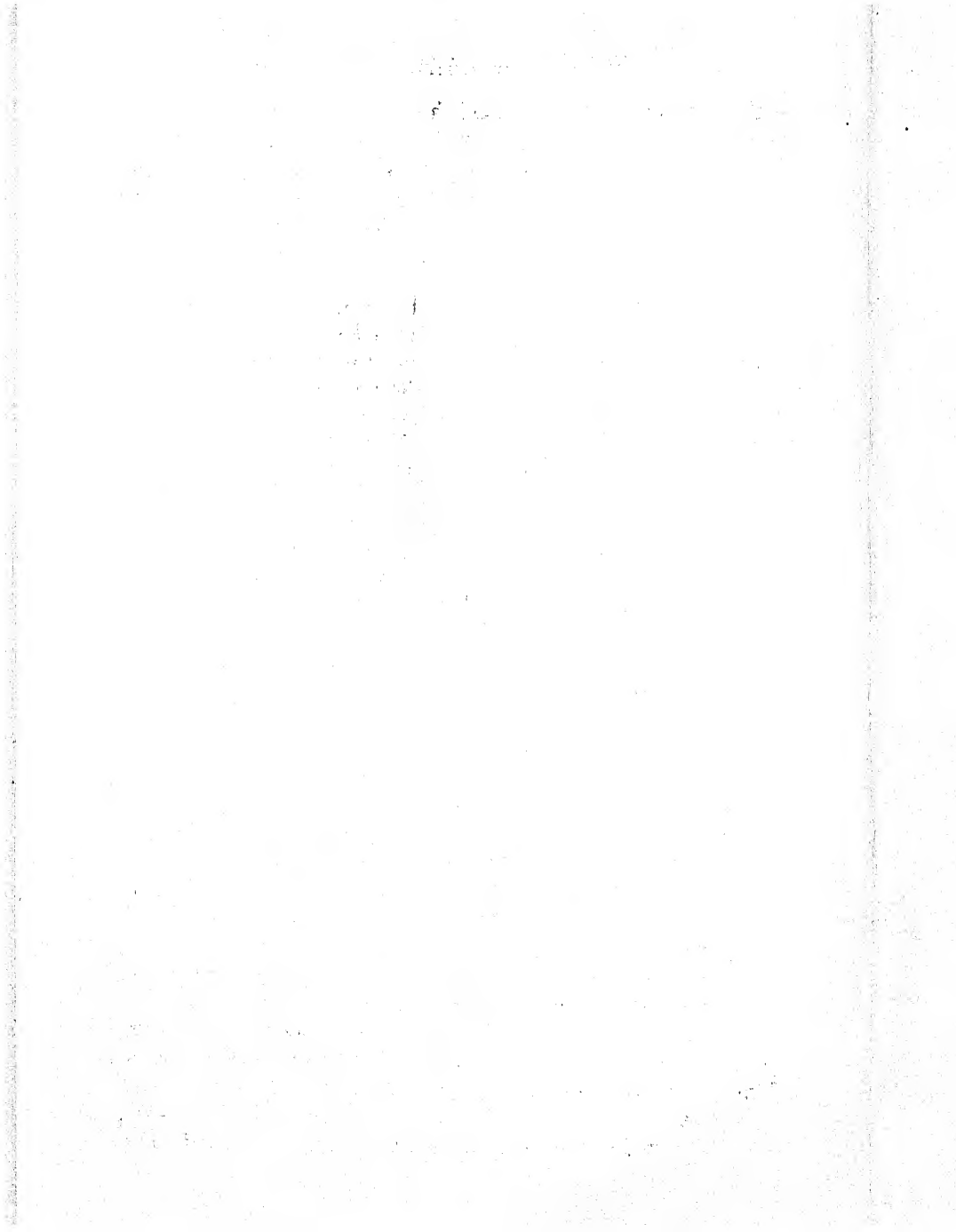
*Before*—A BREEDING PLACE FOR MALARIAL MOSQUITOES.



*After*—A CRICKET PITCH FOR HEALTHFUL SPORT.

THE SWAMP TRANSFORMED





elaborate and exciting sham-fights. The "sham" part of the proceedings was often in danger of being forgotten in the realism of those who took part. Feasting and mortuary rites completely occupied their mental horizon. They regarded the missionary settlement close to their doors as an intrusion. As Abel wrote:

In those early days of my work I often had the miserable feeling, which was more than a suspicion, that I was forcing myself upon people where I was not wanted. However, there was no doubt in my mind, as I looked about me upon that heathen community, that, little as I was wanted, I was sorely needed; and I remembered how often my Master must have been tolerated where He was not welcomed.

One evening, shortly after their arrival at Kwato, a man walked sedately past the camp, greeting Abel as he passed with *kagutoki!* the local salutation. Early next morning some women passed, bearing heavy burdens on their backs according to the Papuan woman's allotted sphere.

"Look!" they called out. "On yonder *aiaru* tree hangs a man by the neck!"

It was the same man who had greeted the missionary on the previous evening, though no one guessed that he was calmly on his way to his end. He had chosen a prominent enough place for his spectacular death. His wife had taken her own life a few days previously in order to spite her husband; and now the husband had committed suicide in order to spite his wife's relations. Abel was learning something of the primitive mind and its working. The corpse was taken to Logea, where the usual noisy wake ensued.

Eager to find out all he could, Abel attended the ceremonies. He found the corpse gorgeously decorated, with his face and body painted in red and white. He was propped up in a sitting posture while his wailing friends prostrated themselves before him. "Not only did they howl one against the other," Abel describing the scene, "but they cut their faces with sharp knives and bruised themselves with round sea-washed stones

till their eyes were so swollen that they could scarcely see." This hopeless, abandoned woe, which would extend even to the knocking off of finger-joints, as an extravagant sign of grief, was, however, merely a conventional requirement. The abject chief mourners had their heads shaved and their bodies entirely blackened with soot and oil. Others were busy preparing the *rigaheruheru*, or mortuary feast, killing and roasting dogs and pigs or attending to the cooking-pots that stood in rows, poised on rocks. A large tree cast its broad shade upon the white sand, and here Abel sat and watched the proceedings, while Dilomi, with true native hospitality, brought him green coconuts to drink. Thus he recounts a typical conversation with a Papuan:

I turned to Dilomi and asked:

"Why have they painted the corpse?"

"It is our custom," he replied.

"Yes, I know that, but what does it mean?"

"*Ibai!*" he said. (Who knows!)

"Thou art not willing to enlighten me," I said.

"No, master," he replied respectfully. "It is not that. Thy question is a hard one for me to answer. We do these things because it is our custom. It is what our forefathers did with their dead, and we do it. I know no more than that."

I saw that my question was too comprehensive for Dilomi to answer, so I continued:

"*Naniwa*,"<sup>1</sup> (What's-his-name) is he dead? Is he dead as that dingo is dead which they are cutting up to cook for his mourning feast?"

Dilomi sucked the air through his lips and teeth, and made a sound by which he expressed a negative, as we might express it by shaking our heads.

"He is not dead?" I said, acknowledging his reply.

"We say he is not dead," the old man answered. "We say only his body is dead."

"Where is his spirit?" I enquired.

"His spirit is still here. When the *rigaheruheru* is eaten, then it will leave this world."

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<sup>1</sup> Papuans will not mention the name of one who is dead.

"Where does the spirit go?" I asked.

"They say," continued the old man with emphasis, as if he did not necessarily wish to imply that he shared their views, "they say that the spirits of the dead all go to a place called *Biula*."<sup>1</sup> The old man turned to face the open sea, and, pointing out across it to where the unbroken horizon almost melted into the pale blue sky, he said:

"It is there."

"But that is where the white man comes from," I said. "Over there is Australia, a land like this. I have been there and have seen it."

"How didst thou get there, Taubada? In thy large canoe? That is not the place. *Biula* is only approached from beneath the sea."

"Beneath the sea!" I repeated with astonishment.

"Yes," Dilomi continued, growing warm with his subject; "this feast that thou seest the people preparing is to help *Naniwa* on his way to *Biula*. All men dread that journey."

"How will he get there?" I enquired.

"There is a rocky cape there," he said, pointing along the shore, "whence all spirits depart from this world. The spirits of our dead descend to a huge cave there. At the bottom of the cave there lives a great serpent. One end of the monster is here. Its slimy body stretches away beneath the sea. Its head rests on the shores of *Biula*. The way is perilous and long. That is why these people have made ample preparations. If their grief is great, and the food they bring is plentiful, the spirit of *Naniwa* will walk with ease along the slimy back of the great serpent. If they neglect their friend today, he will be weak, and his feet will slip; and if he should fall into the sea he will be transformed into a fish."

I looked towards the village. The people were busy with their festive preparations. I saw long rows of cooking-pots, and heard the ceaseless wailing of the mourners. Poor *Naniwa* could count on a safe passage, if there were any truth in this belief.

"What will happen," I asked, "when he reaches the world beyond?"

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<sup>1</sup> The similarity to the term Beulah is purely a coincidence.

"There," said Dilomi, "Sauga will receive him. And Sauga will light a fire under a frame of split cane, and will lay him upon it; and as the heat of the fire rises, the body of *Naniwa* will come to life again; and his friends there will make a great feast in honour of his safe arrival. . . . Taubada, I must go. Another time let us speak together on these things."

Abel tried to study the lives of his Papuan neighbours closely and dispassionately. Every passing incident revealed some new phase of primitive life, or gave some new insight into their mind. These observations left Abel in no doubt about his own opinions, and his conclusions were emphatic.

Missionary critics (he wrote) who tell us that it is a pity to disturb these simple people because they are quite happy as they are, leave me unconvinced. The attitude of the people when I first lived among them was one of wretched foreboding of imminent evil. The continual dread of the approach of an enemy was not more of a menace to his peace than were his own dark thoughts. The Papuan meets the spirit world everywhere and in everything. In his journeys by canoe, in his garden on the hills, in the villages where he lives, he can never ignore it. The spirits of the dead haunt every place he goes to, and have an evil finger in everything he does. Death is a fearful and weird thing to him, and funeral ceremonies are elaborate and exacting because the simplest man in the flesh becomes, after death, an added terror to the community, an evil spiritual influence in their midst.

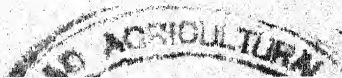
The coming of the white man to New Guinea broke into the life of the native, and caused an upheaval in his primitive system of living which few at that time could have foreseen.

I was with Sir William MacGregor (Abel wrote) in many places when he made known to big communities whom he was meeting for the first time that from that occasion all inter-tribal strife was to cease. And to describe the attitude of the people to such a declaration I can use no better term than to say they were bewildered. Such a change affected their life from every standpoint. It broke down ancient barriers; it widened the

world; it made old prohibitions incompatible; it weakened clan instinct; it put an end to much highly skilled industry and art. War canoes were useless; fighting was prohibited. Blessings came with peace, but it was not all blessing. It was inevitable, but it was enough of itself to shake the tribal fabric to its foundations, and so it did.

The township of Samarai at this time comprised a store, a shed and two or three Government bungalows, all built of corrugated iron. Abel used to entertain a great variety of people, as any one finding himself stranded would look for a shelter at the mission. The visitors at Kwato ranged from naval officers, scientists, missionaries of two societies that had begun to occupy new fields on the northeast coast and the neighbouring archipelagoes, to smugglers and the so-called "beach-combers" of Pacific Island fiction. The reactions of these visitors to the hospitality they received were equally varied. One traveller commended Abel on his knack of making everyone work. A missionary who spent a night at Kwato, on his way to his station, complained bitterly that the wind, blowing across the swamp into his bedroom window, had given him malaria. (In those days it was still thought that the vapours off a swamp were responsible for the dreaded complaint.) A prospector for gold, whom Abel had nursed back to health at Kwato, could not resist the temptation to furnish a front-page description in a Queensland newspaper, appealing to popular sentiments on the way missionaries fared in New Guinea. "They live in luxurious houses, sumptuously furnished, smoke the best Havanas, and stock the finest wines," the world was told.

Visits of British men-o-war were very frequent in those early days. They would appear unexpectedly in the harbour, bringing with them an air of the outside world, and causing no little excitement during their stay. Abel looked forward to these visits. The officers put themselves out to entertain all white exiles. The services of the ship's carpenters could be commandeered for odd jobs, and their experts did everything they could to ameliorate conditions in the outposts. The arrival of a man-o-war usually meant a visit to Kwato for cricket,



to be returned by a visit of the whole Kwato colony to the ship, and an entertainment on the quarter deck by the ship's brass band. In spite of the fact that the cook-boy Jo's culinary achievements were confined solely to his ability to open tins and capsize their contents onto plates, Abel invariably invited the officers over to dinner. Thus a diary entry reads:

Lady MacGregor and man-o-war officers to dine.

*Menu:* Cold bacon—tinned.

Cold boiled mutton—tinned.

Mashed potatoes; onions.

Plum pudding—tinned.

They enjoyed themselves immensely. Or else they are fearful liars!

These dinner parties were always a great success as far as the host was concerned. He seldom knew what he was eating at any time, so that he judged them by his own enjoyment of them, which was purely social. He was a great talker and good conversation was a rare treat for him. If he pleased his guests they also stimulated him, leaving him buoyed up and grateful. "That has done me as much good as a trip to Australia," he wrote, after a man-o-war visit.

The commissariat department of his household was left in the hands of Jo, who was untrained and un conversant with white men's ways, but who nevertheless had a watchdog's loyalty, and a concern for his master's well-being that made up for a good deal. Abel decided that the less he interfered with Jo's domestic sphere, the better. He wrote:

Good motherly old friends have actually written to me sometimes and asked how I ever managed to get my socks darned, who washed my clothes; and who saw that my saucepans were properly cleaned. Really, they meant well, but they often put ideas into my head that made me uncomfortable.

One compassionate friend sent the bachelor-missionary a large cake from Australia. "Like a really good and seasoned Stilton cheese," was Abel's description of it after the usual prolonged journey of those days.



Abel was not a good bachelor. The ordering of his meals bothered him, and his appetite was easily disturbed. Eating was a social function, and while he could enjoy his meals in company, he felt little inclination to relish anything alone. Often he would be too preoccupied with his work to want to be bothered, and would say to his indefatigable cook-boy: "No use bringing me any food, Jo, I'm not hungry." This was not due to a lack of healthy appetite. On one occasion, after a similar remark, Walker arrived from a long absence in the district. He was a great eater and was ravenous. The meal was produced, after all, and Abel sat down with his friend and partook heartily.

At the end of two years in the country Abel was thin and gaunt; periodical malaria had pulled him down in health. The fact that infection was carried by mosquitoes was not yet generally known. Breathing the "miasma" that rose from the damp ground at night was the thing to be avoided in those days. Abel hoped for the day when the completion of the swamp would lessen the danger. In the meantime he buried white men of every description and nationality in the little cemetery. The port of Samarai, two miles away, earned for itself the defaming soubriquet of "the death-trap," a name long since outlived and forgotten. Samarai today is singularly healthy.

"How little I do for these men," Abel once wrote of his white neighbours. "It isn't enough to bury them, but it often seems very difficult to do more." Sunday evenings were set aside for services at Samarai, and these were well attended. Later on he used to take the Kwato choir over in a whaleboat. There was little enough to do at any time in the evenings at Samarai, and the singing was always an attraction. Pyjamas were the usual garb worn by many of the worshippers. The fact that sometimes a percentage of the congregation were not quite sober in no way hindered the proceedings. Often someone would rise swaying to his feet and contradict some point in the sermon. The interruption would be drowned by groans and remonstrances from all round. "Shut up!" "Sit down there!"

"Kick him out!" When such action became necessary the whole congregation would assist in the removal, after which peace would soon be restored and the minister would proceed with his sermon.

The Samarai pulpit was no place for any mincing of words. The simple Gospel addresses were always very much to the point, and were delivered straight from the shoulder. One Sunday evening there had been a special festivity, and consequently Abel expected only a small congregation, if any at all. The choir sang hymns until it was too late to wait any longer for stragglers. The Governor, Sir William MacGregor, happened to be in Samarai, and was seated gravely in the front row. The only other members of the congregation were two hunched forms in the background, oblivious to the world. While Abel was opening his Bible, about to begin, Sir William peered about the dimly-lighted room and realized that he was the only member of the congregation *in compus mentis*. Remembering the usual fire of the preacher, he drawled out in a slow Scotch voice: "Abel, old man, let me off lightly!"

A missionary must be always ready for emergencies, and Abel was prepared to turn his hand to anything to help his white and brown neighbours. One day a sailor arrived with his hand blown off by a charge of dynamite. He had been several days on a sailing vessel before reaching port. An operation was imperative, and Abel, with the help of the Magistrate, Mr. Armit, tackled the job of amputating the arm. A tennent saw from the tool-box, some quills plucked from a goose for drainage tubes, and the sharpest knives they could find, comprised the surgeon's outfit. Half-way through the operation the patient came out of the chloroform and, reaching for his pipe of strong tobacco, he smoked hard while he watched proceedings. He had been well fortified by rum and whiskey and always attributed his ultimate recovery to its magic.

The mission district comprised some hundred and fifty miles of coast-line, from Orangerie Bay to Eastcape, with the adjacent island groups. Walker undertook the patrol work, and the forming and supervision of out-stations, while Abel centred

most of his attention on the head-station, the schools, and the training of native helpers to supply the outposts. Both men were engrossed in their work and were full of enthusiasm.

"This is the only inconvenience that I suffer from—solitude," Abel wrote at this time. Mails were few and far between, and their arrival was always hailed with great delight. Although far from all his former interests, Abel followed the fortunes of county cricket with avidity. The most comprehensive account of the game was always to be found in a certain sporting paper which, unfortunately for its excellence in cricket reporting, was not the class of paper subscribed to by missionaries. However, through the ingenuity of an understanding friend in England, Abel got his cricket news, though for the sake of appearances it always arrived concealed in the wrapper of *The Christian World*.

Abel's days at Kwato were mostly spent with the simple but hard work of teaching, with needed patience, the most rudimentary subjects. He was still unable, through a very imperfect knowledge of the language, to do much more. "Very glorious work," he described it in his letters home. "There is no drudgery in Christ's service."



CARVED PAPUAN WOODEN PILLOW

## VI

### THE COMING OF MRS. ABEL

**B**EATRICE MOXON'S engagement to Charles Abel caused quite a stir among her people. It seemed outrageous to this old Yorkshire family that a girl who was bright and talented should contemplate burying herself in a country they had to search an atlas to find. Each English mail brought a deluge of protests from disapproving relatives against the untraditional plans of the youngest member of the family. Her father, Francis Moxon, had formed a most dismal mental picture of New Guinea, and he imagined all too vividly the malaria, mosquitoes, venomous reptiles and obnoxious insects, not to mention the cannibal propensities of the inhabitants. He naturally could not see his only daughter take this step without grave concern. Her mother, however, admired the young missionary greatly, and she alone championed his cause. It had been her dearest wish that her daughter should be truly loved, and she saw in Charles Abel the fulfilment of this desire and the answer to her prayers. Unknown to those around her, she knew that her days on earth were numbered, and was quietly and courageously putting her house in order. It was a great satisfaction to her to be able to leave her beloved daughter in the care of one whom she trusted.

Abel had hesitated some time in asking Miss Moxon to share his hard life. New Guinea was still a dangerous country, and he himself had become so impoverished in health by malaria that he had been urged to leave at once. He arrived in Australia in August of 1892, looking weather-beaten and cadaverous. His first concern was to recapture the strength that two years of constant fever had drained from him. However, two carefree months in New Zealand, spent in renewing old friend-

ships, worked miracles, and he returned to Sydney once more his buoyant self.

There had been much uncertainty connected with his impending marriage. "It was a sheer fluke that I ever married you at all!" he used to protest to his wife. Mrs. Moxon had begun to fail in health and, being the more anxious to see her daughter settled, had firmly overruled all objections, including the bride's natural wishes to postpone the wedding until her mother should feel stronger. So Charles Abel and Beatrice Moxon were married, after all, at All Saints Church in Woolhara, and set off to the Blue Mountains for their honeymoon. The mother and daughter had been inseparable. "I wonder if other mothers have enjoyed the luxury of a daughter as much as I have," wrote Mrs. Moxon after the couple had departed.

After a short honeymoon the newly-married pair returned to their field, travelling north in an Australian coastal steamer as far as Cooktown. There they waited for the *Hygeia*, a schooner that plied an irregular course to New Guinea and the Woodlark Islands, where gold had just been discovered. The Captain, who prided himself on his eye for making things look smart, did his best to prepare for the bride. The only available cabin was overhauled and painted white; fresh white curtains were procured and hung over the bunk; and the result so delighted the Captain that he invited his passengers aboard for an inspection the day before sailing. He stood at the gangway to receive them and proudly escorted Mrs. Abel to her cabin. With a flourish he drew aside the curtain that hung over the door, and there, to everyone's horror, was a greasy, drunken seaman, dead to the world, lying prostrate in the dainty white bunk. The Captain flew into a rage. He hauled out the offender and kicked his collapsing form up the companionway, cursing him at the top of his voice.

Mrs. Abel's first voyage to New Guinea was no gentle breaking in to the life that was before her. Extremes of weather were experienced in the run across from Cooktown, for the little vessel was mercilessly tossed about in the high seas. One day a sudden squall struck the schooner with great force, and she



heeled over onto her side. All hands were called on deck in a frantic effort to shorten sail. Mrs. Abel, who was lying on a bunk in the narrow saloon, was thrown across the folding dining-table and deposited upon the opposite bunk. Sea poured in, the poop was flooded, and water was swilling in the cabin. The wind died down and a few days later they were becalmed, with the sea smooth and oily and ablaze in the burning sun. For several days the ship remained listless, rocking to and fro like a pendulum on the growing swell. Christmas Day came, and the Captain ordered the Christmas dinner, which was served, complete with plum pudding, in the open on the hatch. So heavily did they roll on that occasion that it was only with great difficulty that they managed to keep the dishes on the table. The cook ingeniously hung such fixtures as cruets and sauce-bottles to the yardarm, from which they swung widely over the heads of the diners as the schooner lurched and heaved.

At last, on a glorious morning, the Brumer Islands were sighted, and ere long the *Hygeia* sailed into the China Straits. The *Niné*, with Fred Walker aboard, had gone out to welcome the new mistress of Kwato, and made a gallant escort as she led the way into Samarai, with her sails full blown in the wind. A royal welcome met the bride as she stepped ashore at Kwato for the first time. She was in ecstasies over the tropical beauty of her new home. The spectacle of a white woman produced great excitement and loud ejaculations greeted her every time she stepped from her door. Throughout the day she was constantly being brought out to meet the gaze of those who thronged the mission house, having never before seen a white woman. The small dimensions of the *dindim* woman's waist of the nineties was one of the chief causes of comment among her spectators.

Walker had done his best to make the sago-bark house look gay. He had hung turkey-red twill curtains over the doors and windows and had ornamented the interior of the house with giant clam-shells. The first day in the country was embarrassing for the new missionary, for the natives followed her about,

quite fascinated to watch every movement. In the evening they gathered the people for prayers, but the hymn they sang, in which the women took the lower register and the men sang falsetto to time of a Papuan jig, nearly upset the equilibrium of the newcomer.

As to her husband, Tamate wrote to Mrs. Abel:

I heard of him some years ago. I met him two years ago, and he sustained all I heard about him. I am astonished at your fearlessness in having him, only I fancy he is worth taming. I have always had a liking for wild savages myself. They are worth looking after, and then there is, as you will experience in your undertaking hereafter, the joy of seeing them tamed, meek and lowly, and in a proper state of mind.

Mrs. Abel's arrival on the scene brought such transformation to life at Kwato that the two men, Abel and Walker, looked on amazed. Gradually and almost imperceptibly, things began to change. The sago house began to look like a home, and with the greatest tact bachelor furnishings disappeared one by one. The turkey-red hangings gave place to something cooler and more appropriate. The young bride was a born home-maker, and chaos was soon turned into comfort. The furniture was for the most part made of packing cases, but ingenuity and good taste were also used, alas, too successfully. Interior photographs that were sent home with great pride, to show what could be done with very little, produced a wrong impression and were criticized as being "too luxurious" for an approved missionary dwelling. The kitchen department also came under thorough overhauling. Jo had been lent to Tamate for one of his long journeys, and the dirty *Gipora* who had taken his place, was put through a double course of instruction in cleanliness and cookery. Mrs. Abel imported the first piano into the territory and Abel and Walker, when their labours were over in the evenings, would sit and listen to Beethoven and Chopin. They would look at each other and marvel at the contrast with their old dull evenings, often rendered idle by the glimmer of an oil lamp. Three months of this damp climate,



however, completed the total ruin of the shortlived but much appreciated piano.

With the home in order, Mrs. Abel turned her attention to the station, especially to the women. A drive for cleanliness was one of the first things instituted. The students who were being trained at Kwato protested. They objected to their wives being compelled to be clean. Bathing, they declared, was "immodest"—a conclusion it was not easy for an inexperienced Western mind to grasp. In the end, however, cleanliness became established as not only next to godliness, but strictly required at Kwato, and was accepted as other things have been accepted, as part of the station régime.

These were great days for Abel. With his wife beside him and sharing fully in his work, they began to plan ahead and to dream their dreams for the future of their people. Walker, in a way that was truly characteristic, rejoiced in the happiness of his friend, and wrote of his colleagues: "It is a treat to see how happy they are. I feel very grateful to Abel for bringing such a wife to adorn and brighten our Kwato home."

Occasional visits of men-o-war still made a welcome break in their daily routine, and all who came enjoyed the bright atmosphere and good fellowship of the little sago-palm dwelling. "I shall be glad indeed to get back to dear old Kwato," wrote the Governor during his absence in Australia. Abel already had the reputation of making his guests work, but to judge by a letter from Tamate they were also compelled to play. Describing a visit to Kwato, Tamate writes of being inveigled into playing football: "kicking anywhere and everywhere, throwing my legs into space and finding them sometimes painful to get back."

In those days it was not unusual for six months to elapse between mails. Mrs. Abel longed for the day when she would receive her first letters from home. But when at last a man-o-war arrived unexpectedly, with the long-awaited letters, it was only to bring the crushing news of her mother's death. This shock resulted in a serious breakdown in health. For weeks no food could be found to agree with her. There was no medical

help available, and in this weakened state she readily contracted malaria, and grew from bad to worse. Her husband's anxiety was shared by all their Papuan children, and much sympathy was expressed in many and unfamiliar forms. Those who attended the patient would unwittingly create a flicker of amusement as they crawled under her bed rather than pass in front of her, which would be disrespectful boldness in Papuan eyes. Abel was distracted to know how to coax his wife to take nourishment. One day, having taught the cook-boy how to make blanc mange, he gave careful instructions that it was to be served as temptingly as possible. The effort was successful, except for the fact that the boy had put in a liberal quantity of salt instead of sugar. Anxious to please, as everyone was in the troubled compound, he looked around for a suitable receptacle in which to serve the concoction. Finally he found an old-fashioned candle-holder, the very thing, he decided; and, filling both the saucer and the candlestick to their brim, he brought the blanc mange with great pride to the invalid's bedside.

When Walker returned from a protracted tour in the *Niué* he found the whole station in deep concern, the *Sinebada* listless, and his friend almost in despair. They decided that there was nothing for it but to put the patient on board the *Niué* and to make a dash for Australia. This was a journey that was not without its hazards in as small a craft as their little ketch. However, the two men were desperate, and it did not take them long to make the decision. After prayer together, they hastily packed a few necessities, carried Mrs. Abel on board, and, having done what they could to make her comfortable, they set sail immediately.

The Nor'west monsoon was at its height, so they covered the distance in record time. The wind was working up into a gale and the little ketch, with bellied sails, was spanking along when a line of breakers was sighted ahead. This, they thought, was the Osprey Reef, for which they were on the lookout and from which they could get their bearings. But the breakers lengthened before them until they stretched across their bows. They soon realized, to their dismay, that they had somehow missed

the Osprey, and the Lark Passage for which they were making, and were being driven onto the Great Barrier Reef. It seemed as if there could be no escape from a pounding destruction ahead. At last Walker detected one point where at intervals the breakers parted, which might prove to be a passage. Their only course was to give full tackle to the sails and to make straight for the spot, hoping they could reach it as the passage cleared. Praying for deliverance as the roar of the breakers ahead grew louder, they sped towards the foaming cauldron. Just as they were on the reef the breaking seas parted, and the *Nimé* plunged through the narrow opening, the waves crashing behind her stern. They were safely through.

They now found themselves in a shallow lagoon, surrounded by reef. Dropping two anchors, fore and aft, they made fast their ship and then, almost hilarious with the sense of release from danger, they knelt on the deck and thanked God. They had no idea where they were, or whether there was any way out of the reef. The rest of the day and the following night were spent at anchor. They could hear the continual roar of the sea on the reef, but it was behind them, while their ship rode secure and snug at her moorings. Early the following day Walker was scrutinizing the charts. He had an inkling of their whereabouts which might or might not be correct.

"There should be three openings, and the third one navigable," was his report as they cautiously cruised along the reef. He climbed the mast and the little party anxiously waited for his observations.

"There is one opening!" he shouted at last. A long silence followed.

"Second opening!" came the voice from aloft. Everything depended on finding the third. There was a tense waiting for what seemed an interminable period.

"Praise God, the third opening!" shouted Walker at last from his lookout. All was plain sailing, now. Ere long the loom of the land could be discerned, and by nightfall, welcome sight! the lights of Cooktown were twinkling in front of them.

Late one night Abel and his wife went out in a lighter to meet

the steamer bound for Sydney. The wind was boisterous and an angry sea was flecked with white curlers. For over an hour they were tossed about before they saw the lights of the approaching ship, and there was difficulty in getting alongside on account of the seas. Abel lifted his wife onto the rope ladder and watched her cling and climb until strong arms hauled her onto the deck. Their farewells were drowned in the fury of the wind and Abel watched the dipping lights of the steamer grow dim on the horizon. The lighter nearly foundered, much cargo had to be jettisoned, and she had a fierce struggle to reach Cooktown harbour.

This was the first separation, the beginning of many, though they vowed that it would be their last, as they often did on many other occasions in the days yet ahead. Abel and Walker found it hard to readjust themselves to bachelor conditions. Anxiety for his wife, lack of news of her, and great loneliness when Walker returned to his sphere in the Bay made this a time of severe trial for Abel. But his troubles brought him very near to God. He learned to know the restorative power of prayer, upon which he relied all his life. He formed also the habit of committing his loved one to God in a definite act of faith, and this brought him peace and a sense of God's protection over her. A daily tryst had been arranged, and early each morning they met together in spirit at the Throne of Grace. "Spend quarter of an hour in His presence," Abel once wrote to one in trouble, "and you will rise from your knees so calm, so grateful, and so cheerful that you will never want any one to prove to you that there is a God, and that He answers prayer."

As time went on the mission was beginning to touch the lives of the people more and more, and not always without friction. There was a great deal of opposition in a group of villages in Milne Bay caused by a man named Tokeriu, who avowed that he had received messages from a spirit lodged within a tall tree. These "prophecies" were all directed against the new influences that were invading the country and resulted in hostility to everything foreign. The people were told to prepare for a

flood, and to build refuges on the hills. An immense tidal wave was to efface all traces of the foreigner once and for all. Then a large vessel would arrive, bringing back to earth the spirits of the departed, and laden with "trade" superior to any that the white man had to offer. People were called upon to eschew everything *dimdim*.

Abel and Walker, with great audacity, marched into this "prophet's" village, where, they were to learn later, the people were prepared to capture them. Their fearlessness and the fact that they had not so much as a stick in their hands, must have somewhat disarmed the people, who were taken aback by their sudden appearance. The missionaries took their seats on the verandah of the most prominent house as though the place belonged to them. They were surrounded by an excited, armed mob who were evidently having a disagreement. Fortunately for the composure of the missionaries, they did not understand a word of what the animated dispute was about, as a dialect peculiar to this group of villages was spoken. They boldly called for the chief and for the "prophet." The latter stood before them and harangued the whole village, repeating the mysterious revelations of the spirits in detail, all of which contained direct or indirect thrusts at all foreigners. The most alluring part of this programme of extraordinary events was the promise of the shipload of ghosts, with the unlimited supply of free calico and free tobacco. The oration reached its climax when the "prophet" pointed dramatically to a towering tree that rose behind the village, shouting:

"Behold! That is the tree where the spirits spake to me!"

When the emotion of the crowd had died down sufficiently Abel and Walker had their say. They told the people, through an interpreter, that all this was nothing new. Their own white forefathers had also often been filled with alarms through their thoughts and their dreams, but all such things had long since been driven from their country by the Gospel. Had not similar reports arisen in Milne Bay previously? There was only one thing, they said, that white men and Papuans alike needed to fear, and that was displeasing the only true God, at whose bid-



ding they had come, and whom they now pleaded with their hearers to regard.

As they had boldly come, so they boldly departed, but when once hidden by forest they ran for the beach, where their boat was beached. Abel reached the water first, and listened anxiously to yells and shouts in the forest, while he waited what seemed an eternity for his less-athletic colleague to appear. Walker arrived at last, panting heavily, and they put off to sea, escaping from their pursuers by a narrow margin.

There was a great deal of travelling to be done in these days, and it was often weary work. Journeys were always long in whaleboats or dugout canoes, and there were setbacks to any plans that might be made. There would be hours of toiling against adverse winds and tides, or the boat would lie idle upon a brazen sea, with her sails flapping and the sun beating upon the travellers as they waited for a breeze to spring up. A Papuan perched on the jib would call to the sleeping winds, invoking them in a drawn-out, chanting voice: "*Bauri-beku-bauri-beku-bauri-beku-ku-ku-kul*" Often the lights of home would be sighted at last, only to be lost to view once more as the tide changed against them, putting their destination out of reach for yet another night. And yet in later years, when motor power had replaced the old toilsome travelling, Abel looked back on those experiences with a glow of remembrance. He loved the sea, and he loved all the peculiar sounds and sensations of sailing. In the discomforts and hardships of early days of continual camping in all sorts of conditions, he seemed to experience the nearness of God. Every journey was remembered for some answered prayer, or some evidence of the directing hand of the One whom he served. Thus a lonely and depressing outpost, where myriads of mosquitoes always made nightfall a time of dread, became the very gate of Heaven for him and was the scene of a reconsecration of his life and a renewal of earlier vows. On this occasion, fears for his wife had driven him to prayer, and he had spent long hours in Bible study which had brought him much comfort. Walking up and down the beach in prayer, he gained such a victory over his

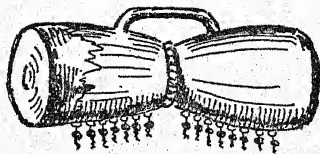
fears as to make this place forever a landmark. "Fears which sometimes in my weakness took hold of me have been entirely banished," he recorded in the note-book that he always carried. "I have found our Father true to His great word, and my heart is comforted. I am no longer to grieve and worry over things which are entirely in His loving hands, but simply to trust Him, and all will be well."

Towards the end of the year he was afflicted with tropical ulcers which defied his efforts to heal. He travelled two hundred miles to see a doctor, who ordered him off to a colder climate immediately. He reorganized the work at Kwato and set things in order for his departure. The boys and girls all came to say good-bye personally after family prayers on the last evening. He was touched by their affection.

"Bring Sinebada back," they all pleaded, "and our minds will be good. It is not well for the Taubadas to be alone!" Abel endorsed this opinion heartily.

"I told you their heads were screwed on the right way!" he exclaimed to his colleague.

At dawn the next day the *Niue*, bound for Cooktown, was steering her course for the open sea, with Abel on board on his way to meet his wife in Sydney.



PAPUAN DRUM



## VII

### THE PAPUAN CRUSADER

THE night before he sailed from Kwato, Charles Abel recorded his ambition for any child that God might give him: "Not the things most sought after by the world, wealth or fame, but simply that the child might be a mighty force in the world against evil and for good." It was while he and Mrs. Abel were in Sydney that his first child—a daughter—was born.

When they again turned their faces toward New Guinea it was at the beginning of the hot season. For safety's sake they left their child in the care of Mrs. Abel's cousin, Madge Parkin, whose forecast from the *Britannia's* passenger list had proved prophetic three years earlier, and who had since found her way to Australia. The Abels travelled from Cooktown in the Governor's steam yacht *Merrie England*, but on arrival at Port Moresby, where they hoped to pick up an eastward bound trading boat, they were put into quarantine. The *Merrie England*, with the Yellow Jack flying from her foremast, was summoned west to the Gulf of Papua, where Sir William MacGregor was making explorations. Abel and his wife, who were prisoners for the time being, found themselves unwillingly sailing hundreds of miles in the wrong direction. The Governor's first words when he joined his yacht at the Puari Delta were: "Pull down that flag!" and to everyone's relief the ominous emblem was lowered. A whaleboat approached and came alongside with a white man sitting in the stern, and up the gangway, like a gust of wind, came Chalmers, who happened to be working in the vicinity. He was in high spirits and very full of the idea that Abel must accompany him on a pioneer journey up the Aivai River. He clapped his young friend on the back, admonishing him, with his usual raillery, not to chafe against

the divine interference with his plans. On the banks of this river there lived a large and influential tribe that had yet to make its first contact with the strange white beings who were beginning to inundate their country. Tamate was anxious to explore immediately so that the first impression upon these reputed wild people might be made by the mission. Mrs. Abel had experienced enough of separation, and insisted that if there was to be any risk she would go, too. The two men soon found that it was futile to object. Tamate then seized upon the idea that in native eyes her presence would be the greatest proof of their peaceful motives. "Splendid! Splendid!" he cried. "We will make it 'The White Woman's Peace'!"

Tamate was all enthusiasm when they started off on their journey up-stream in the steam launch *Miro*. There was a retinue of old men on board who always followed Tamate. Most important of these was a man named Iko, who knew the village Iala, for which they were making, and could speak the language of the people. There was also Vabure, wizened, dirty, and cunning, yet one who many times had proved himself indispensable to Tamate. He could speak Iko's language. All communications to the latter had to pass through Vabure. No one had any idea how far up the river Iala was situated. Iko measured the distance on a grimy forefinger, but they were doubtful how many miles this digit represented. By noon they reached the middle of the finger, and by 3 P. M. they were approaching his claw-like nail. They knew that somewhere, not far ahead, the people of Iala were engaged in their daily occupations, ignorant of the shock they were soon to receive in the apparition of a steam-launch moving up the stream, with no visible means of propulsion. They passed mile after mile of silent mangrove forest; the tangled, twining roots rising out of the water, and the tall treetops almost meeting overhead.

At last they turned a corner and saw before them the brown village built on the mud banks. They slackened speed, only just stemming the tide, to give the people time to recover from panic. There was turmoil ahead. Canoes crossed and recrossed in wild bewilderment. By the time they were abreast

of the village both banks of the river were lined with men, standing like statues, motionless and paralyzed with astonishment. There was not a woman or a child to be seen. The *Miro* slowed down a second time. The atmosphere was tense. Tamate was well to the fore, standing at the bow like a field marshal, planning for every moment. Just as they dropped anchor their Malay engineer, adding a touch of his own proceedings, pulled the cord of the steam whistle. The siren blast cut the air like a knife. Instantly every man was armed with bows taut, and hundreds of arrows aimed at the defenceless visitors.

Iko mounted the low bulwark and shouted "Peace!" at the top of his voice. Prompted by Vabure, who in turn was prompted by Tamate, he repeated:

"Peace! Peace!"

"We are friends!" said Tamate.

"We are friends!" "*We are friends!*"

"See, we have brought a woman with us, this is the white woman's peace."

"See, a woman! The white woman's peace! *The white woman's peace.*"

The awe-struck warriors of Iala were on the defence. When this repeated message had reached their ears Tamate called for the chief and asked for a canoe. Reluctantly one was launched and slowly approached the *Miro*. The men put down their weapons at a word from their chief. "You give them greater confidence than all our words," Tamate whispered to Mrs. Abel. The three missionaries stepped into the canoe and went ashore. Tamate rubbed noses with the chief and gave him a present.

"We have come to make friends," he said through his interpreters. "We have brought a woman of our tribe, for we come in peace. See, we have no weapons. We have great things to tell you. Some day we will come again and tell them to you. Today we only come to make friends."

He then offered a brief sentence of prayer as the three bowed their heads.

"Now then, back as fast as we can," he urged. "Not a moment to lose. This is all they can stand."

Calmly they stepped into the canoe, having been well drilled not to show the slightest trepidation. They breathed freely once more when they found themselves safe on board the *Miro*, with her engine starting off smoothly, but as they rounded the first bend the propeller fouled. Darkness was descending suddenly, as it does in tropical countries, and as the river was infested with crocodiles no one dared to venture overboard to release the propeller. All night they lay at anchor, longing for the morning, and hoping that no one from the village would come their way and discover their helpless plight. Providentially a torrential rain fell that night so that they were practically obliterated from view.

At dusk myriads of insects swarmed from the mangrove forests. Much to Tamate's amusement, Mrs. Abel, who had shown no signs of fear in the face of armed savages, was terrified by the weird insects. She spent one of the worst nights of her life trying to accustom herself to the large cockroaches that ran freely about the walls of the little cabin.

The next morning they steamed back to the Puari Delta. Abel was immediately sent for by the Governor, who glared at him as he entered his study on board the *Merrie England*.

"Did you take your wife up the Aivai?" he demanded abruptly. Sir William's strong words when Abel replied in the affirmative would better not be recorded here.

Back at Kwato, and full of gratitude for their return, for the welcome of their Papuan friends, and for the many opportunities that lay once more before them, Mr. and Mrs. Abel took up the life that had been interrupted.

The arrival of the new mission schooner *Olive Branch*, to serve the stations from Port Moresby to Milne Bay, made a great difference in the work of the missionaries. Fred Walker had not only planned the schooner but had devoted his own savings to make her suitable for her task. He had supervised her building during his furlough in New Zealand, so that meant that she was seaworthy and comfortable. Walker had seen so

much of the discomforts that white women had to endure in small sailing boats that he designed the *Olive Branch* with special consideration for a lady passenger. There was even a tiny bathroom, which in those days was considered a most unnecessary luxury. Unfortunately, the new boon to the mission raised quite a storm of disapproval. Walker was censured for extravagance. The missionaries' wives, however, blessed him from their hearts. Shortly after this he severed his connection with the London Mission, at first working independently with his brother. Later he started an industrial mission in the Torres Straits, to which he devoted the greater part of his life.

Efforts to overcome native opposition and indifference, and to win the goodwill of the people, formed an important part of Abel's work. One night he was returning from a tour of the district in a dugout canoe, hoping to make the China Straits at daybreak. Hour after hour twenty paddlers kept the long-snouted canoe moving rhythmically, with the spray flying as they dug their paddles into the water. At midnight the sky became overcast. Presently they ran into a heavy downpour which beat so hard upon them that they decided to camp at the next village. They beached their canoe and were kindly received by the Papuan owner of a large house, who invited them to the shelter of his roof. Their entry at midnight caused quite a commotion. The house was a commodious one-roomed affair with low walls, a high and steeply sloping roof, and a low partition a few feet high dividing the men from the women. Their host mended the fire that glowed in the middle of the house until it was crackling brightly, and the household settled itself once more to sleep.

Abel lay across the floor and watched the shadows that the fitful fire elongated upon the interior of the high thatched roof. He took stock of the spears, fishing nets, earthen cooking pots, and similar signs of Papuan wealth that were stowed in every nook and cranny, festooned or suspended from the rafters. Attached to the stout post that carried the ridge-pole were two human skulls that glared down upon them every time the fire

was stirred into a blaze. Breathing the smoky atmosphere of that chimneyless, windowless house, Abel found that sleep was far from him. In one corner two men were holding conversation in subdued voices. Presently Abel overheard his host telling a member of the crew how he had visited Maivara during the trouble that had arisen a few years before through the prophecies of Tokeriu, and had persuaded his friends to spare Abel's life, and to remember that he came in peace and bore no arms. Abel realized that, unknown to him, there had been an advocate on that occasion, when he and his late colleague had spent some of the most uncomfortable moments of their lives before a truculent mob of natives.

This experience convinced Abel that the hour was ripe for him to visit the Maivara villages again. Time had long since discredited the predictions of their "prophet," on whose advice they had killed all their valued pigs in preference to letting them drown, and had gone to the trouble of constructing new houses on the hills.

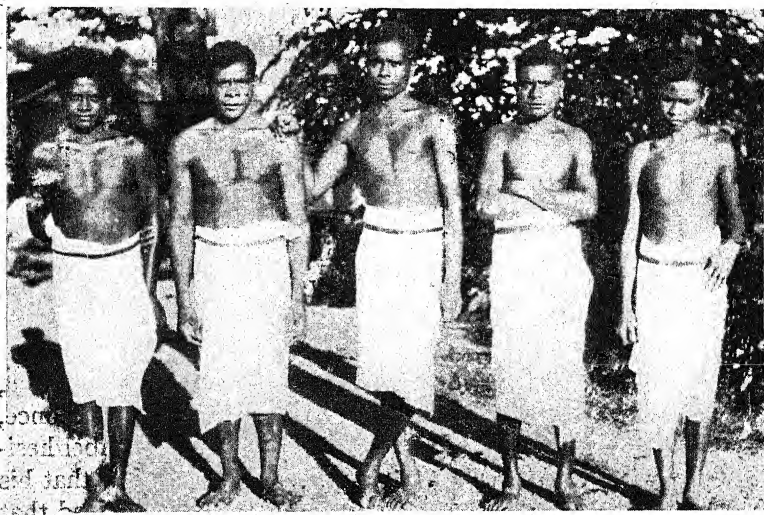
By this time the Abel's little daughter had been brought up from Sydney to Kwato. The child was the boon companion of her mother and the idol of her many Papuan admirers. When the whole party set off in the *Olive Branch*, and travelled from place to place, news of the proposed visit to Maivara went before them. The old soreness that the men of those villages had felt when the missionaries had escaped them on the earlier occasion revived, and they planned an ambush.

It was Good Friday, a hot, stifling day, when the *Olive Branch* anchored far out in the bay beyond the shallow sand banks. Abel left the ship in a dinghy, and made for the shore. He had not gone far on his way when a dugout set off from the *Olive Branch*, pursuing him with great speed, and overtaking him. A message from Mrs. Abel begged him to return at once, as their little girl had suddenly been taken very ill. Abel hesitated, as he was eager to go on to Maivara. He knew that his wife had forebodings about this visit, and at first decided that he would press on, but would hurry back as soon as possible. But the messenger would not be put off. This was no common





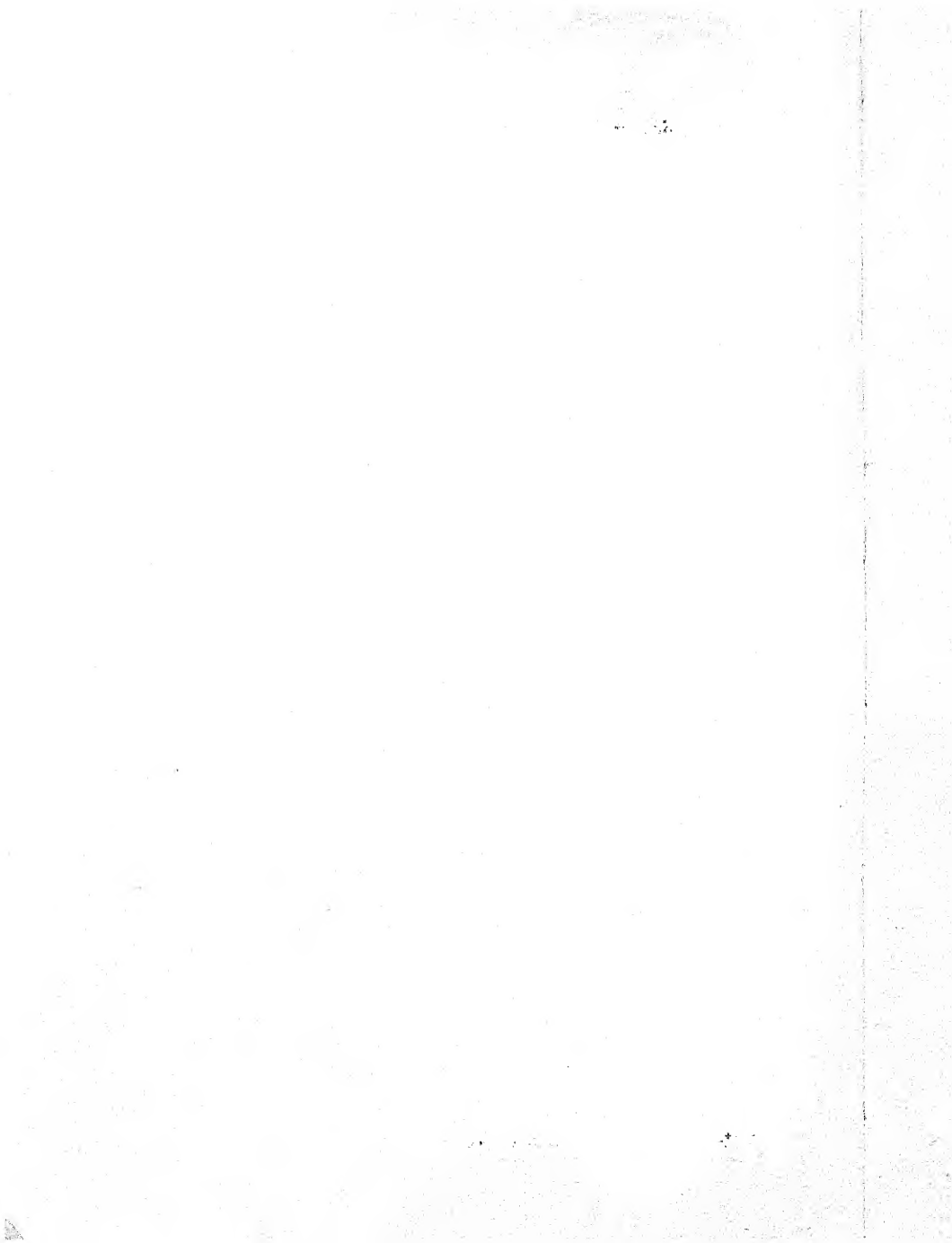
UNCONVERTED MEN FROM MILNE BAY.



FIVE YOUNG MEN TRANSFORMED BY THE GOSPEL.

MEN FROM MAIVARA—HEATHEN AND CHRISTIAN





ailment. The child was very ill, he urged. Taubada must come quickly.

So Abel turned back, but reached the *Olive Branch* too late to see the little girl alive. The ambush waited in vain. The little ship got under way and the sorrowing parents turned homewards. They learned later that ice might have saved their child from the results of sunstroke, but ice was still an unknown blessing in that country.

Many years later Abel was walking along a forest track at Maivara with some friendly old men from the vicinity. One of them said: "Taubada, we are very much ashamed when we pass this place. Here it was that we waited for you with our spears many years ago when you came to visit us, but something made you turn back instead."

Abel's eyes were dim. It is not often given to men to pierce the veil that hides the purposes of God. The day came when those who had lain and waited to attack him in the bush with their spears, built their own village church upon that very site.

After the loss of their child Mrs. Abel accompanied her husband on his journeys whenever possible. On one occasion they were sailing among the Trobriand Islands, which the Methodist Missionary Society was taking over as a special sphere. They were cruising round Goodenough Island, noted for its yams, hoping to procure a good supply of native food. Here some unfortunate episodes had prejudiced the natives against white men in general, and particularly against the white man's laws that were then being firmly enforced. The *Olive Branch* anchored in a little bay and the natives swarmed round in their canoes to sell yams. They were visited by the chief of a group of villages; a condescension on his part. He was apparently a man of great importance and impressive dignity. His people treated him with awe, even crawling on their faces before him with a subservience unknown among the people of the Kwato district. This chief cross-examined Abel through an interpreter, and expressed his pity when he learned that the white man had only one wife! The following day, when Abel and his wife ventured ashore, there was a noticeable lack of noise and

chatter in the crowd of men who followed them along the bush track. "I don't like this silence," Abel remarked to his wife. On their arrival at the village they noticed the black looks on the part of the men who were armed with spears. There was also an ominous absence of women and children, which they knew too well as a sign of evil portent. The only thing to do was to keep calm at all costs. Trying to appear as nonchalant as possible before the men, who practically surrounded them, they mounted a low platform in front of a large house, hoping thereby to give an impression of ease and friendliness. Here they sat, outwardly unconcerned, but inwardly besieging heaven with unuttered prayer. Mrs. Abel caught sight of a woman lying in a little room adjoining the house and holding a newborn infant tightly in her arms. She had been too weak to follow her sisters into the bush. Acting upon an impulse, Mrs. Abel ran towards her and, crouching low, she looked into the room where the woman lay. Though she could speak no word of the dialect of the village, she caressed the tiny infant, and stroked the mother's arm. This simple action made an instant impression. The inhospitable villagers grasped what no amount of reasoning could have revealed to them. These white folk were their friends. At a sign from their leader their whole attitude changed. When Mrs. Abel stepped out of the hut the cruelly-barbed spears were no longer in evidence, and the menacing expression had vanished from many faces. No victory was ever more complete. A few minutes later the missionaries returned to their boat, laden with presents of bananas. Recent foes had been made friends by the simple sign of love.

In those early days there was the inevitable clash between the natives and their white invaders. All had to suffer because of the outrages of a few that cast a slur upon the entire white race. There are always in a primitive country a type of men that steer clear of the restrictions of civilization. These at one time formed the majority in Papua. The benevolent motives both of the missions and the Government were often misinterpreted by the natives being obscured by prejudice and suspicion. The Government, limited in its choice of servants, was

not always faithfully represented. Punitive expeditions to establish the white man's justice and to enforce peace often succeeded in proving his military superiority, but did not improve his prestige. In some places ill-feeling on the part of the native towards the *dimdim* lasted long, and still dies hard.

The discovery of gold within the boundaries of Abel's sphere of work was by no means an unmixed blessing. Entire villages were abandoned as the inhabitants moved their wives and families out of reach of the white invaders. The field eventually was deserted through an insufficient yield of gold and a dark chapter closed. But for many years the white man's name was used as a term of insult.

Inevitably the missionary was brought into collision with the miners. Abel felt it his duty to protest against every cruel or criminal act. The natives came to him to unburden themselves of their woes. But in the court-room, under intimidation, they would tell a different tale. Abel demanded justice, and saw no hope for the country unless the people felt that they could rely on protection and redress. The missionary began to find himself singularly friendless, so far as his white neighbours were concerned. Antagonism ran so high at Samarai that on several occasions an armed escort was provided to meet and bring him to the Government offices when he was summoned to court. This was a hard and unhappy period in Abel's life, for he hated the atmosphere of contention. The goodwill of his fellowmen meant much to him, though it did not mean all. He was followed by curses and imprecations as he walked down the main street of the little town. His Kwato boys, believing that he was in danger of violence from his own countrymen, refused to leave his side when he left his mission station. In spite of his protests there was always a bodyguard, appointed among themselves, to stand by him. His unofficial visits to the township were usually made under cover of night, landing at the back of the island, in order not to involve those whom he had to see. When some brutal murders occurred, some of his own Papuan followers being among the victims, matters were brought to a head, and Abel found himself drawn into the cauldron.

One Papuan named Sipiliei who had served Abel as a guide in the mountainous country at the head of Milne Bay, was a kindly-disposed man, who always welcomed the *misinare* with manifest joy and was proud of his friendship. Once when Abel had been asked to accompany an official inquiry, Sipiliei met the party in his canoe out at sea, and took them by a short cut to the goldfields. Later, after there had been a fight that had ended in the burning of a village and the routing of the villagers, he was again asked to act as guide to another party of investigation. The latter arrived at their destination without their guide, and Sipiliei was found tied to a tree, hanging dead in his ropes, his body riddled with bullets. This was but an episode in a bitter struggle that included a long tale of murders, suicides and disregard for those in authority. When Abel was summoned to Australia to appear before a Royal Commission, leaving Mrs. Abel and Miss Parkin at Kwato, faithful Papuan boys kept guard and refused to slacken their vigilance.

There is no doubt that these troubles and the missionary's fearless espousal of justice did much to establish Abel in the eyes of the natives. They could not doubt his disinterested friendship. They refused to think of him, as in one case it was pointedly suggested concerning a venerable veteran missionary, that perhaps the reason he had come so far afield was that his own country would not have him!

"When I saw Taubada face revolvers pointed by his own angry countrymen, in order to speak out for some Papuans, I knew he was truly our friend," testified an old native eyewitness of an incident at the mines. Walking through the forest many years later in the same vicinity, Abel came suddenly upon a party of women at a bend in the track. The women immediately threw down their burdens and vanished into the surrounding scrub. One of the mission carriers cried out:

"It is not a white man, it is only a missionary!"

As he repeated this information the women began to reappear, shamefaced and embarrassed.

"Oh, Taubada, we thought you were a white man!" they apologized.

The people in his district never forgot Abel's readiness to stand by them in time of need. They also had great confidence in his honesty. "What a reflection on our countrymen," he wrote when a deputation of heathen natives pleaded with him to buy a certain leasehold property. "Two young white men have lived on that land for ten years, and the natives of the district come and beg me to save them from another." The people insisted that he take their coconuts to pay the rental, but he told them they might be offering what they could not spare. Sivakuri stood up and said: "We have only one mind. We ask you to take the nuts. We will not eat and drink of them until the news reaches us that you have secured the property from the Government, and then they are yours."

Such days are happily growing distant. The Papuan today has many white neighbours who are his true friends and who are genuinely interested in his welfare. He is governed by an administration that not only safeguards his interests, but has been the means of providing him with many temporal benefits and of greatly improving his condition.

"So far as Papua is concerned," wrote Abel, "it will go down in history as something for which those responsible may be justly proud that the Government has from the first been careful to see that the interests of the Papuans have been their primary consideration. A succession of able administrators have each upheld a tradition which alone makes a country worthy to govern a territory occupied by a backward race."

## VIII

### THE KWATO FAMILY

TRAVELLING up and down the district formed an important part of Abel's work from the beginning. When his wife first came to Kwato she used to accompany him on these journeys. They took with them also the little band of station children so that they could keep an eye upon them.

Each morning before weighing anchor they would assemble the boys and girls on deck for morning prayers. A hush would come upon them as they read God's word, the quietness being broken only by the gentle lapping of the waves against the hull. The early morning hymn of praise sounded strangely sweet over the calm water of their anchorage. These were times of great refreshment. In the splendour of a Papuan sunrise God seemed very near. Sometimes a Papuan boy would lead in prayer; in a well-worn phrase of those sailing-boat days, yet one that never lacked sincerity, he would remind God that they were "but a little stick, floating about on the ocean."

Their retinue sometimes grew as they progressed. The following is one of Abel's descriptive pictures:

"'Are all the boys and girls on board?' I asked a little anxiously.

"'I think so,' was the easy-going reply.

"'Go and count them,' I said.

"'The Samoan teacher returned a little later and said:

"'They are all here and *five more!*'"

One morning they were walking along the beach at Mailu when there was a rustle in the bush and a girl dived out of the foliage and threw herself at Mrs. Abel's feet. She clung to the white woman's skirt and poured out a tale of woe in a tongue different from that of the Suaus. Not one word of her impassioned story was intelligible, but there was pleading in her voice



that could not be mistaken. She looked so ill-used that one more member was added to the party. This girl, Boru, recognizing kindness in the faces of the white strangers, had staked everything on them as her only means of escape.

A growing family of girls and boys began to find a refuge at Kwato from some of the bitterness of heathen life. The responsibility thrust upon the missionaries was one that exercised all their thought and was the subject of much prayer. Here was hopeful material for training. Ignorant as these children were of the missionary's message, they responded to love and were a hopeful contrast to the darkness and indifference around them. Naturally they themselves could little grasp their "Taubada's" thoughts, but in them he saw great possibilities. The following translation of a letter, brought to Abel with an air of great importance, throws a candid light upon their own outlook:

TAUBADA,

Greetings. We have stuck to you for a long time. Your word we do not disobey. But there is one thing we would like. Beads, white and red. If you are not willing, be it so. If you are, tell the storeman at Samarai. That is all.

We are,

IOSIA AND NIPOKA.

Abel and his wife began to plan for the highest development of the girls and boys. "Work is the *sine qua non* of residence at Kwato," he wrote. "Our young people are growing in course of time to have quite a mean opinion of a lazy life."

Next to work came sport. Cricket and football followed on the filling of the swamp.

Their own amusements (Abel wrote) are often vicious. You cannot take away the pastimes of a race and give them nothing in their place. . . . The spirit of prophecy was fulfilled when we transformed our spears into wickets, and our shields into cricket bats. . . . Most people will be able to appreciate our satisfaction, as we sit in the shade of the citron trees sometimes after the day's work is done and watch the boys at cricket, with

their wickets pitched on the very spot where, a short time ago, the stagnant water and oozing mud exuded vapours which poisoned the air.

When the swamp was vanquished and a hard level surface took its place, a job which lasted four years, the next task to which this new generation of Papuans set their hand was the decapitation of the rocky peak at Kwato. Once more they took up their shovels and crowbars and, in three years' time, a new playground had been levelled, and a wooden bungalow was erected where formerly the peak had risen. Once more this work called for the astounding energy of Ono, the Raratongan. Ever in the forefront of activities, he worked "as if he had a certain amount of energy to give out every day, and as if the days were about two hours too short to do this comfortably." He had a voice to wake the dead, which he seldom modified, and Abel did not dare to attempt to quiet Ono's vocal strength. "These people sadly need shaking up now and again, and if I destroyed this peculiar gift I might repent some day," he wrote.

This fine Polynesian race had never been given their chance, Abel used to declare. Ono was unlike the majority of South Sea Island teachers that were in charge of out-stations. They were often inclined to be lazy, and their lives as ordained pastors did little to combat this trait. Although there were among them men whom Abel was to remember all his life with admiration for their patience, self-sacrifice and courage, yet he came more and more to deplore their influence. They were good men, though often ignorant and full of a sense of their own superiority. It was the system that had educated them into starched clothes and a clerical life that was to blame, and not the men themselves. There was a wordy argument at Kwato one day when a missionary visitor from Samoa, upholding the superiority of the Polynesian, said in support of his contention, "Why, our people think that it is *infra dig* to work!"—a terrible indictment for which the missions were not without blame. Samoan teachers in New Guinea were largely the reason for

Abel's views on self-support, industrial evangelists, a system which was later developed in the Kwato district.

The work was not always encouraging; there were the darker moments to be faced. Hope, which sometimes burned brightly, at other times seemed to lack any incentive to exist. There were times of disappointment and crushing defeat, when the missionaries were severely assailed. Their most trusted young people were sometimes the ones that failed them. "Days and nights of sorrowful toil when evil seemed to envelop us like a cloud," Abel wrote. "The devil would come right into our midst and pluck them from us, some of the souls we had sought to win."

While the surrounding people showed no response to their message, the disclosures of moral conditions among their own boys and girls caused them almost to despair. They even began to wonder whether it was worth while to go on; whether they were aiming too high; or whether there was anything hopeful in the Papuan. However, in their darkest hours they could not forget the loyalty of these boys and girls in the past. They remembered their pluck in times of emergency. Some had not hesitated to risk their lives for the missionaries in dangers by land or sea. One scene Abel often recalled: a certain stormy day a capsized whaleboat in a breaking surf, and, dominating every other impression, the stout refusal of his boys to leave him, in spite of their own peril. He owed his life to their faithfulness. He knew that the weakest Papuan would stand by them to the very end in any crisis. Once Abel wrote to his wife, when he was alone at Kwato: "They would die for you if needs be. They strain every nerve to attend to my wants. . . . They almost jump out of their skins if I call them to do anything. I have only to say '*Sinam*' (your mother), and they shake all through their little sinful frames and cry!"

These were days of heart-searching. Abel and his wife would spend whole nights in prayer, sometimes on their knees, and sometimes pacing up and down the verandah. Strong action had to be taken if a new moral standard was to be established. As their young people began to realize what life in the "new

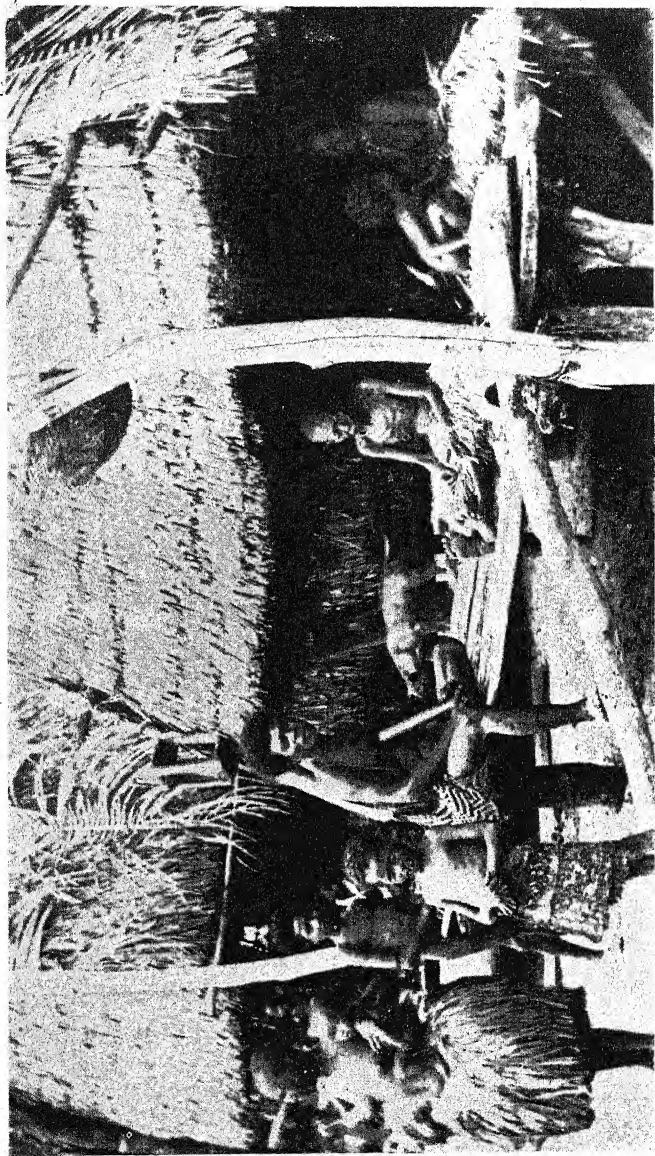
way" was to mean, some found this more than they were prepared to face, and returned to heathenism. Saying "good-bye" to some of these whom the missionaries had come to love as their own children, was the greatest sorrow and caused tears to be shed before God.

Finally there came a week when all work on Kwato was suspended. Abel and his wife felt that it was useless to go on, and gave up their whole time to prayer to find out God's will. Out of this bitter travail there came what proved to be, in his own words, "the very foundation of Kwato."

At the end of that unforgettable week they saw a beginning of the answer to their prayers and signs of the Holy Spirit's work among their children. One after another the boys and girls came to see either their Taubada or their Sinebada. For the first time there was conviction of sin, and so real was its burden that they were in great distress. Days were spent in hearing the confessions of these young people. Broken and contrite, they opened their hearts, like little children longing for forgiveness, and for riddance of the things that had become a dead weight and a cloud on their minds. There were evidences of real conversion.

Abel began his work again, and in a new way. From that time onwards Kwato grew by leaps and bounds, and with the spiritual growth of the mission colony there were new responsibilities and challenges facing the missionary.

Childhood is of short duration in a tropical country. As the boys and girls grew up, there began to loom the problem of their future. Some of the young people married and went out as teachers. They were often ignorant and unformed in character, and not to be trusted without continual supervision. But they were prepared to hand on what light they had to those who were without any. Abel's idea originally had been that young men and women trained at Kwato should eventually return to their homes to exert their influence in their own villages. Experience proved, however, that the new habits they had formed, and the new outlook gained at Kwato, had unfitted them for aimless native life. Out of touch and out of sympathy with the



A PRIMITIVE PAPUAN FAMILY AT HOME.



old life, they invariably attached themselves to white men. As many of the latter were entirely unsympathetic with the standards and ideals of the mission, Abel saw a sad waste of effort and unfulfilment of promise. It became apparent that not only must he train these children while they were young, but he must do something to provide a useful and healthy future for them. He believed that the introduction of industries would enable him to keep his young people longer at Kwato. A more intensive and thorough education seemed to be the only solution to the problem. The fact that Kwato boys and girls were no longer to be content with a worthless, drifting existence proved the success of his efforts to raise the standards of these Papuans.

Any education (he wrote) worthy of the name, *i. e.*, education which is not merely instruction but which aims primarily at the moulding of character, will, the more thoroughly it is done, result in making the heathen life distasteful and unendurable. I am bound to say that I regard this result with unqualified satisfaction.

Abel set himself to do all in his power to remedy the failure of promising converts to adjust themselves to the conditions of life around them. He planned that Kwato should produce a new Papuan society, Christian and manually educated, in which young converts could take their place as independent and useful members. The coming of the white man and of Christianity had virtually taken away the principal occupation of the people. Even the abolition of inter-tribal fighting by Government law and power, beneficial as this was, had robbed the Papuan of a source of constant activity and had contributed to the state of apathy to which the people were fast being reduced. Those who accepted Christ found themselves marooned in native life, and still more inactive. Vice was the soul of many old customs and sorcery was the motive of much labour-entailing ceremonial. As Abel wrote to his colleagues, in defence of his views on industries:



It is the poverty of the material we have to work upon in a country like this which creates the need for an industrial auxiliary to our mission. . . . We have robbed the people of an incentive to much work. Are we going to supply them with no other incentive, or are we to be satisfied in letting Christianity take root in the inertia which it has created?

The results of Abel's first efforts to teach carpentry to the Kwato boys exceeded his highest hopes of the Papuan's ability to learn and excel at manual crafts. Under patient tuition from Mrs. Abel, the girls also learned fine sewing, and the day came when they could ply the needle without the necessity first for a lecture on cleanliness or a preliminary inspection of hands. Papuan embroidery and drawn-thread came to be favourably compared by experts in London with the finest Chinese and Indian work.

Very early in Abel's missionary career he began writing long and important letters home to the Directors in London, laying the whole situation before them. He sought to show the collapse of much that was vital to native life, and the fact that what he was giving the young people was a complete contradiction of the life in their villages. In those days supporters at home looked askance at the idea of a Christian mission soiling its hand with anything secular. "You will find opinion here solid against you," wrote Dr. Wardlaw Thompson, at that time Foreign Secretary of the L. M. S. While he kept Abel closely informed as to the sentiments of those at home with regard to his unconventional ideas, he used to write encouraging letters. "I do not share your views, but I do believe in *you*," they seemed to infer, so that Abel felt that he had the confidence of the man at the helm of affairs in the Society.

Dr. Thompson was a member of the deputation appointed by the L. M. S. Board to visit New Guinea in 1897. Before these visitors arrived Abel managed to sandwich in a holiday. His wife was already in Sydney recuperating from an illness. There had been, once more, a hasty dash to Cooktown, this time in the *Olive Branch*. In the better boat they were able to

undertake the journey in more of a picnic spirit. During a short and blissful holiday in the Blue Mountains they translated the Acts of the Apostles together, and completed a book of Suau Hymns. Abel also played cricket for a local club in the town of Lawson and returned to New Guinea thoroughly refreshed and with the brightest recollections of his change.

They arrived home in time to welcome the deputation from England and to enjoy the opportunity of introducing their visitors to Kwato. It was already a place of many associations. There were landmarks that spoke of struggle and of victory. Each building had its history. There were earnest talks far into the night. Abel told his Directors what his aims were for the Papuan, what Kwato was to stand for in New Guinea, and what were their hopes for their children, the new generation for whom they coveted every advantage. The deputation brought encouragement to their host and hostess, and Christian fellowship, which was a rare privilege in that isolated country. They were impressed with all they saw and could realize the contrast that Kwato afforded with the dreariness of a licentious heathen life. If they had hitherto believed in Abel, they now began to believe in Kwato as well. Recognizing the special circumstances of the work, they gave their missionary a kind of unofficial sanction and told him to carry on with his experiment.

With the completion of the first ten years of service, a furlough was now due. Wardlaw Thompson was anxious that Abel come to England. He had confidence in his ability, not only to lay his views acceptably before the Board, but also to convince them of their value. Malaria had played havoc with Abel's health, and the change was badly needed.

There was much to cheer him as he reviewed the past decade. Apart from the boys and girls on the station who were living sincere, Christian lives, there was now a scattered handful of men and women who, though primitive and ignorant, were undoubtedly converted. Outstanding among these was Dilomi. An outlaw, even among cannibal people, when the Gospel first came to his island, he was now a tireless Christian worker under the new name of Paulo, and had been the first to bring

the Gospel to many Papuan villages. His friends, when talking over old times, would call Dilomi *tauhemahemanabara* (the wild man), in his own hearing, as though Dilomi no longer lived. It was a common thing for Papuan students, when preaching, to point to Paulo in the congregation as their best sermon illustration, and one that would prove to their hearers the power of God to change men. On one occasion a great concourse of the people in his village was engaged in vociferous mortuary rites, and a flourish of old beliefs, that made Abel realize how firmly the minds of the people were gripped by their fears.

"It is because they are ignorant, Taubada," interrupted Paulo, reading his thoughts. "They remember the way of the serpent. But I will tell them of Christ. He is the only Way."

That night, as the people worked themselves to a frenzy of wailing, there was one voice in their midst witnessing to his own discovery of the Truth, and declaring to a spirit-fearing people that "Christ is the only Way!"

"He knows nothing about doctrine," Abel wrote of Paulo; "he has no words in his language for any of the subtle points which split up the Christian Church into a dozen sections at home, and yet his is a truly saintly life."

If there was cause for gratitude to be found outside of Kwato, there was certainly much to encourage Abel within his own compound. He had great belief in his boys and girls who, shoulder to shoulder with him and his wife, were going to set up new standards in their country. To add still more to his gratitude, his white neighbours, some of whom had little sympathy with his aims and outlook, also wished him well on his departure. The Samarai congregation presented him with a gift, accompanied by a scroll on which they inscribed their appreciation of his efforts on their behalf. Sir William MacGregor, a staunch friend, and a supporter of the methods he had observed in practice at Kwato, in bidding the Abels good-bye, wrote:

I do trust you may be allowed to carry out your wise plans

with regard to native education. I entirely concur with them because I realize their practical utility. Mrs. Abel and yourself will always have my best wishes as intimate friends and as fellow-workers.

Every detail of life at the mission station was organized in readiness for the long absence. There were days given up to private talks and prayer with individuals, always a supremely important side to Abel's work. "Greatly encouraged," reads an entry in his diary at the close of a busy day. "I could see the influence of my dear one's talks. God bless Muna and Jo, and all the boys and girls."

Fred Walker returned to take charge in Abel's absence. Each of the older girls was put on trial as "overseer" and all were well drilled by Mrs. Abel in their new responsibilities.

Weak in health, but triumphant in spirit, Abel sailed away from Kwato, with his wife, their little daughter Phyllis, and her Samoan nurse, the rescued Solatai. Ill health delayed them for a time in Sydney, and they went up to the Blue Mountains until sufficient strength had been regained for them to continue their journey. The remembrance of the past ten years, with its sorrows and its joys, made their hearts burn within them, for the Master had walked with them along the way.

## IX

### STRIKING OUT ON NEW LINES

**A**BEL travelled the length and breadth of England speaking about the work at Kwato, and meeting many friends who had faithfully backed him with their prayers.

It is your work as much as ours (he wrote). God knows how helpless we should have been without you. If we have had the brunt of the labour—and it has been very hard sometimes—we have had the unspeakable joy of this great service, which you must share.

The family settled in a little town by the Thames, and here Mrs. Abel worked on the final revision of the Gospels they had translated into Suau. Meanwhile her husband filled a large programme of speaking engagements, thrilling his audiences with the story he had to tell, and the vivid picture he drew of darkness and degradation, of the life of the people among whom he had lived. But when he spoke of the results of his ten years in New Guinea, small as these seemed from the point of view of statistics, he was able to forget himself entirely.

In an illustrated booklet, entitled *Kwato*, he told the story of these first ten years, outlining the vision that he had for the new generation of Papuans that was being brought up at Kwato. In this booklet he attempted to justify his departure from stereotyped methods of mission work. The proceeds from the sale of the book were devoted to enlarging the mission premises at Kwato to accommodate a greater number of boys and girls.

The strenuous furlough in England gave little opportunity for leisure. Fortunately, a merciful provision had enabled the Abels to enjoy a holiday in Italy on their way home. Before they left Kwato a Papuan boy interrupted Abel one very busy

morning, offering to sell a pearl. Telling the boy that he had no idea what it was worth and did not want it, Abel dismissed the matter from his mind. The boy took the pearl to Mrs. Abel, who offered him three pounds, which he accepted and walked off beaming, thinking himself truly in luck. The pearl was sent to a friend in Italy, Dr. Lambertto Loria, a scientist who had often been a welcome guest at Kwato while he was on his researches. Dr. Loria sold the pearl in Paris for ninety pounds, and this enabled his friends to break their journey in Italy. He entertained them at his home in Florence, and then escorted them to some of the famous places of interest in other centres. Neither Abel nor his wife spoke Italian, and they noticed that Dr. Loria was often engaged in an animated controversy with officials on the trains. "It is all right," he would say evasively whenever Abel enquired after the cause of the dispute. Finally, however, he explained that the Samoan nurse was the cause of the quarrel.

"I am trying to explain that she is not over age," said Loria, pointing to Solatai, a strapping girl well into her teens, of the usual large Polynesian build.

"I tell them that in her country the babies are born *so* big," he continued, measuring a yard with his hands!

Bright spots of his days in England were occasions when Abel managed to steal a day off to see a county cricket match, or one of the annual contests at Lords. He also revisited Cheshunt and played cricket there once more, this time on the side of the old students. As the months in England drew to a close both he and his wife found time too short for all that they had hoped to do. A period of dismal weather made them long for their return to the Pacific. "I am nearly dead with the rush of life," wrote Mrs. Abel, "O for the sun!" They looked forward to a rest from meetings, from travelling on trains, and from anxiety over a delicate child whom they had been obliged to hand over too often to the care of friends. As they turned their faces eastwards they realized that they were no longer leaving home, and eagerly anticipated the home-coming that awaited them in New Guinea.



The Kwato light on a dark horizon, spotted from the deck of the *John Williams* late one evening, marked the end of the long journey. Soon the hearts of the home-comers were thrilled to see Kwato and the adjacent islands lit up with fires and torches that extended along the beaches, and marked the skyline of the smaller hills. While they were anchored for the night amid-stream, all Kwato was in a state of excitement, the boys working at high pressure to put the finishing touches to the enlargement of the mission house made possible by the sale of the booklet *Kwato*. The travellers spent an interminable night, "too excited either to feel tired or to sleep." Early next morning a flotilla of canoes escorted them over to Kwato, where a joyful meeting with the whole station, as well as village neighbours, was followed by a heartfelt service of thanksgiving.

Of the situation he was now facing, Abel wrote:

Barbarism, at least in its externals, is easily broken down. The building up of a new and better condition of life to take its place is a long and difficult task.

It was one that called for careful consideration of the special needs of his people. The annual reports sent home by the missionaries at this time were not encouraging. Work was uphill and, in their widely separated districts, the missionaries often saw little fruit from their efforts. Even where Christ was accepted, Christianity seemed to find no permanent and indigenous foothold. H. M. Dauncey, writing from Delena, said, "The people's heads are too full of sorcery, feasting and dancing, to have room for anything else." Thinking that a certain amount of failure might be due to ineffective methods, Abel put the case for the establishment of industries before his colleagues at the annual session of the District Committee in 1903. He quoted the distressing reports they had been obliged to send home and stated his belief that only by giving the people "a new, healthy, useful, progressive life," would the ground be prepared for the Gospel to take root in the fullest way. The results of his industrial experiment at Kwato were already, he



believed, an important contribution to the solution of the problem.

We ought to be willing, if necessary, for our work's sake, to strike out on altogether new lines. We should be prepared to abandon cherished ideas as to what exactly constitute the duties of missionaries placed as we are. . . . We are not here to make savages religious. We are here to make these weak, foolish, superstition-bound people, strong Christian men. We shall have to come much more in touch with the life of these people, outside our strictly spiritual work, before we shall succeed in this. We shall have to come down to that level in which we find them so full of sorcery and fighting and immoral dancing, and supplement our great message, and make our religious work a real thing by meeting them in the common affairs of their daily life.

All points of contact with the Papuan people were welcomed. One of the immediate results of the introduction of industries was that Abel was brought into touch with his neighbours in many new ways. The missionary approached the natives on a new footing when he shared their everyday life by working with them. He found in this way new and valuable opportunities of winning those whose lives he entered. Often people heard of the Saviour for the first time through a gang of Kwato boys felling timber in their vicinity, and making friends with those whom they employed to work with them. "Why are your ways different?" was a question frequently asked. Whatever impression might have been made in the villages by their preaching, the lives of the Kwato boys, as they camped and worked, were seen and understood by all. Expeditions for hardwood logs brought a rich harvest.

There was, however, a great deal of opposition to this new side to the work. This industrial work is all very fine, said supporters in England, but it is not the work for missionaries. Putting the case before his colleagues in New Guinea, Abel wrote:

I did my best to join the Society as a layman; and although

I see now, with the Directors, that, all things considered, it was best for me to come among you as a qualified "Reverend," I still strongly protest against my usefulness and influence being limited in any degree by that title. My ordination to the work of a missionary to a savage people should bear with it no disqualification to engage in any necessary work for Christ's sake. Nothing in His Name can secularize me. If I am true to my great trust—the conversion and uplifting of my people—whatever work I touch, to such an end, I spiritualize. I would gladly renounce my ordination so that I might be free to put forth all my energies in Christ's service.

The new venture at Kwato was proving to be a real blessing, so that the criticisms that poured in seemed singularly groundless. The well-known arguments were brought forward that the missionary, engaging in industrial activities, was open to the temptation to become engrossed in such things at the expense of the higher and primary objective. Armchair critics cited cases of men who had ceased to be missionaries in anything but name. One went so far as to write: "The missionary is apt to become sordid and secularized, and is tempted to become a trader for selfish ends."

With such an opinion Abel had little patience. "If we are only kept honest for want of an opportunity to become reprobate, then the sooner the temptation comes and finds us out and rids the Society of our miserable services, the better," was his rejoinder.

Another argument brought forward was that industries would be sure to involve unfair competition with the white people who were making their living in the country. This objection cut across the whole of Abel's hopes for the Papuan, which were that he should not be allowed to die out in the face of new influences, as seemed to be the case with certain fine Polynesian races, but that he should become a useful and independent citizen, with an important place to fill in the development of his country.

If we do not boldly champion their cause (he wrote), and

insist upon their right in their country to fair and open competition with foreigners, we shall lend our hand to their destruction, and a "white" New Guinea will, at no distant date, reward our pains.

On one of his visits to Australia Abel had met a well-known Adelaide citizen, Mr. James Angus, who had been interested to hear the missionary's views on the importance of industrial missions among primitive people. Later Sir George Le Hunte endorsed Abel's opinions, citing Kwato as an example of the value of industries. As a result, Angus promised to finance industrial activities in the L. M. S., but he died before his gift was completed. His trustees, however, decided to devote a third of his bequest to the development of industries and an annual allowance from this sum permitted Abel to run a separate industrial branch of the work at Kwato, which was named the Angus Industrial Mission. The early success in this side of the work emphasized the need for a wider scope. Abel often had to combat the growing easy-going attitude of the people, since the increasing lethargy of Papuan life was becoming more and more apparent. On the other hand, he began to see the contrast in the spirit of his own boys and girls at Kwato, and in the stamp of discipline that their training was beginning to put upon them. His admiration for these young people was great. He believed that they were the hope of their race. To give them the chance of making the highest use of their lives, he felt, would be more than worthwhile for the sake of the whole country.

The Papuan at work—the man to whom he was trying to bring a vigorous, independent Christian life—he described as follows:

He is slow and lazy. He is seldom thorough. He botches his house rather than repairs it. He will suffer permanent inconvenience where a day's labour will save him all further trouble. To see him shamble off to his garden to repair his fence, dragging his unwilling feet through the soft sand, and almost treading again in his own footsteps, makes you yawn and feel tired yourself for the rest of the day.

It troubled him that his efforts were so confined, when their success made it imperative to push ahead. He wanted to establish a sawmill, and discussed the whole venture with his senior boys. The success of the new enterprise would depend upon them and whether they would prove themselves capable of the responsibility. These youths, whose devotion to their missionary was not untinged with hero-worship, were easily fired with his enthusiasm. Determined to prove themselves worthy of further trust, they began to put their best efforts into their work.

The family now included a son, whose arrival had been an occasion for rejoicing. Abel had expressed his hope for a son: "If a boy, may he be a bit of a rogue, under grace, and live to honour God and serve Him as a missionary." On the day of his birth there was a cricket match at Kwato against the white team from Samarai, and Abel, who could not help playing well on that triumphant occasion, made his century. There was a great ovation when the board announced the score, and the father, with overflowing spirits, carried his bat up to the mission house and proudly laid it in the cot beside his small son.

Ill-health had begun to dog Abel's footsteps. With many responsibilities, and work calling him in every direction, malaria followed him like a spectre. "I worked it off one day: I played it off the next: I quinned it off the third, but yesterday I was heavy and aching. I never longed more for a rest of mind and body. I feel quite worn out." Thus he wrote in 1904.

The whole colony at Kwato begged him to go away and get well, promising to work loyally in his absence. He had already packed his family off to Australia, to regain strength after a succession of unusually hot seasons.

Now he finally set off to join them. The Samoan teacher, Maanaima, was left in charge, while Jo supervised the industrial work and the discipline of the station. "Had a helpful meeting with the girls and boys. Splendid spirit pervading the place," was the last entry in his diary written on the morning he sailed.

The arrival in Sydney was one of the bright landmarks in

Abel's life. His wife met him at the wharf, and, after a prolonged talk over the teacups in a restaurant, they caught a train for Burradoo, where they had taken a cottage for their holiday. As this was in a lonely district where robberies were very common, they were warned by the police to beware of tramps and suspicious characters. One night stealthy footsteps were heard in the garden. Abel roused the two Papuan boys who were with them; the idea of routing thieves seemed to appeal to them greatly. They sprang from the door of the cottage yelling, whooping and slapping their thighs, as they gave chase. The whole countryside echoed with wild Papuan shouts. The family was not disturbed again.

During this furlough Abel worked hard to arouse interest among his friends in Australia and New Zealand in his scheme for a sawmill at Kwato. He succeeded in raising money for the initial outlay, but after that the venture was expected to finance itself. The establishing of a steam mill was a big thing at Kwato, which the boys took seriously. A motto in the Suau language hung in a prominent place in the mill expressing their spiritual pledge in view of the new enterprise: They were determined through God's grace to give their best, both to work and play, for the glory of God. Henceforth to the hum of human activity in Kwato there was added the throbbing rhythm of machinery, the staccato of steam exhaust, the steady beat of the breaking-down, and the whine of the circular saws as they sliced rough wood into sawn timber. Papuans engaged in any labour are seldom seen all working at once. One man works while the others sit and watch. When he, exhausted, throws down his tools another takes his place. There are usually more watching than working. It was inspiring to see very many hard at work in the mill, with the concentration that machinery demands.

An abundance of excellent Papuan timber was available and house-building was an industry that thrived from the sawmill. There was a great demand in the country for skilled labour and the Kwato carpenters, under the leadership of Jo, built a number of houses for the Government, for missions and for planta-

tions. They travelled as far west as the Fly River District, and Daru, near the Dutch boundary. The discipline and Christian character of these youths was noticed by all who met them. They established Kwato's reputation and gave the mission a name that succeeding generations have to labour hard to maintain. These journeys gave opportunities for important evangelistic work. Already Abel began to see his views in action, of evangelists earning their support with their own hands, after the manner of the Apostle Paul, and at the same time preaching the Gospel, backed by the force of industrious lives. In what he called "the old system," there was too much danger of teachers, in spite of their sincerity, settling down to soft billets. With their limited capabilities, they often did not have enough to do to combat ingrained laziness, or to develop the backbone that a virile Christian life demands. "We do not merely want college-trained pastors for New Guinea," he wrote.

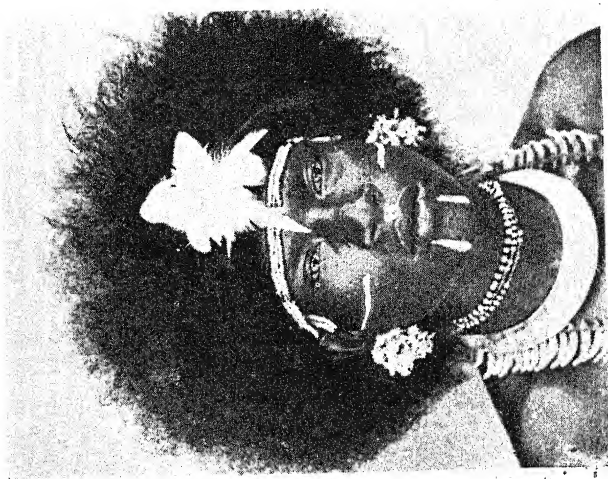
Josia Lebasi, better known as Jo, the foreman of the industrial department, was a man of unusual intelligence. White men in the country recognized his superiority and treated him with a regard unearned by other Papuans at that time. Abel was greatly touched when Jo told him that he envied "the meanest white man his wide mental horizon, and his ability to look ahead. He had vision enough himself to realize rationally his own limitations, with his lack of any but the most elementary education, a language inadequate to his mind, and understanding only the simplest English. He was always a challenge to Abel to do his utmost to give a fair chance to the Papuan.

Jo was a child-like soul, with a child's simple but strong faith. His letters to his "father" and "mother" — Papuan Christians began to address Mr. and Mrs. — a vital experience of Christ and a close walk with Him. His letters brought much encouragement. Yet Jo himself would often show that he was only a "babe in Christ" and might not know as much experimentally as was attributed to him. In spite of his many abilities he remained humble, and his earnest Christian witness made him a power among his people. On occasion, when he had taken a strong stand against a





JOSIA LEBASI



A PRIMITIVE "DANDY."

# CHRISTIAN AND NON-CHRISTIAN PAPIUANS





a white man who was an unbeliever, a scoffer, challenged Jo point blank to prove that there was a God. Eagerly, and with his usual simplicity, Jo told his interrogator in broken English the story of his own conversion, and described the power from God that had come into his life to overcome sin and temptation.

Another outstanding character in the little colony was Edidai, formerly a heathen woman, who flung everything aside that belonged to her old life when she came to Kwato. This step cost her a great deal, including the loss of a lover; nevertheless, she stood firm, and lived a most consistent life. Abel watched her naturally stormy nature grow gracious as she walked with the Master, and wrote thus of her:

One night after midnight I had occasion to get up and, walking around my verandah, I was concerned to find a light burning in the girls' room. Someone was breaking the rules. I went to the door and opened it. The light was low, and I could not see anything clearly. Presently Edidai's familiar voice said from the far corner:

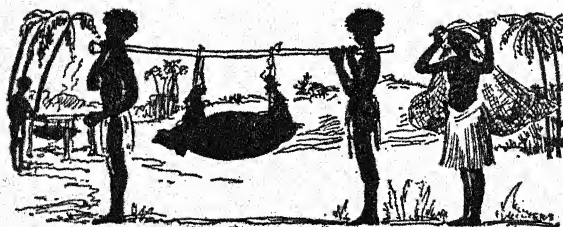
"It is all right, father; it is I."

I peered over in the direction from which her voice came, and there she was, speaking to one of the younger girls, three hours after bedtime. "It is all right, father." Yes! Edidai knew that she might ignore a rule without breaking it. I saw what she was doing: it was Christ's work she was engaged in. Several of our girls have told us that their first serious thoughts were turned to Christ because Edidai had sought her opportunity and had taken them away in the bush alone, or had sat up at night-time when others were asleep, and had pleaded with them to decide, while they were young, to live for her Master.

Abel and his wife learned much in the pastoring of their children in God, and came to realize more and more the simple truth that "whosoever shall not receive the Kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein." Anxiously they watched for signs of growth, for development in character, and for mental awakening. Set-backs only served to cement their relationship with these children of the faith, identifying them with their weakness and penitence. Some of their greatest joys

were experienced during times of united prayer, when the girls and boys themselves would petition God to make them strong. And from their knees they would arise yet more united, with vision and determination renewed, and above all with a greater dependence upon their Lord.

We have seen many of these children grow up to manhood and womanhood under Christian influence (Abel wrote); we have watched them fighting against temptations, overcoming evil tendencies and vices contracted in early childhood before they came to us; we have heard their simple prayers as they have opened their hearts to their Father in Heaven; we have seen the work of the Spirit in their lives; we have listened to their confessions of sin; in tears we have witnessed their profession of Christ; and we have received, as part of our reward, the love of our grateful children.



A VILLAGE SCENE

## X

### UP FROM SAVAGERY

**D**URING the first few years of Abel's residence in New Guinea no less than seven white men were murdered in his district. At that time there probably was not an adult native who could truthfully say that he had not eaten human flesh. When Abel's book, *Savage Life in New Guinea*,<sup>1</sup> was published in 1900, certain anthropologists who had recently visited that country objected to applying the term "savage" to a people as amenable as they had found Papuans to be. Abel regarded this as an unintended compliment to the influence of both the Government and the missions. His critics might have been less inclined to quarrel with the title of his book had they arrived earlier on the scene. The book was not an anthropological record, but was intended to give a graphic picture of many-sided missionary life among a primitive people.

A missionary in a country like New Guinea had to be ready to turn his hand to many things, and Abel was no exception. A glance back at these days shows him travelling indefatigably round his district, visiting the *ekalesia* groups, as members of the Papuan churches were called, supervising industrial work at Kwato, teaching in school and many times nursing the sick. Mrs. Abel cared for patients wherever they could be accommodated. Sometimes they would be brought into the kitchen late at night, when other available space was occupied. As early as 1904 Abel wrote: "Hospital an absolute necessity." It was twenty-five years before this hope was fulfilled. In earlier days the toll of life among white residents was very high. Abel performed the last rites for many of his white contemporaries, and

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<sup>1</sup> This account of his work was published as a gift book for the young people in Great Britain who were collecting money for the support of the mission steamer *John Williams*, the "children's ship," as she was called.

before Samarai had developed a little cemetery was filled with miners, pearl-divers, traders and missionaries: representatives of the vanguard of civilization. Epidemics spread through the villages, playing havoc with the Papuans, for even so-called children's diseases of civilized countries are a serious menace to ignorant primitive peoples. By them illness is supposed to be due to evil spirits brought in through the machinations of a sorcerer. Therefore every effort is made to drive away the ghostly invader by the use of charms, but none apply remedies to cure the sick body. A Papuan running a high temperature will often make for the sea and sit up to his neck in water in order to cool his fever. A considerable death-rate is not surprising, especially where there are epidemics.

Malaria, followed by complications from carelessness and ignorance, kept a continual sick list at Kwato. "I regard Kwato almost as a plague spot," wrote the medical officer at Samarai at that time. Abel's diary recorded a daily tally, with the peculiarities of each case, some delirious and raging, others listless and torpid, as the complaint ran its course. Occasionally the amount of illness became so alarming that work was suspended. Once when he was alone at Kwato he was obliged to give his whole time to nursing, going the rounds of the patients at intervals throughout the nights. "The sawmill goes slowly," he wrote. "I am too bewildered with sickness and funerals to think about what goes on in that corner." Once the foreman of the mill came to him with a serious face to report some mishap to the engine, but it seemed to him that nothing on earth mattered so long as no one was actually dying. Finally the true facts concerning the causes of infection were discovered and attention was directed to the sources of danger, the stagnant breeding-grounds of the mosquito. "If five per cent of my bites are anopheles," Abel wrote, "and one per cent are those of the gentler sex, I shall need quinine." A regular quinine dosing ritual was inaugurated as the first step to combat the evil. The second step was a drive against mosquitoes by a great clean-up of pools and rubbish dumps. The fatalities of myriads of larvæ in every puddle and marsh were accounted

for by libations of paraffin. An army of boys and girls made a raid on old tin cans that had been thrown into the bush and the grassy hillsides. Even the water-tanks were found to be alive with larvæ. "I dipped up a cupful of water and found two hundred in it. I was staggered," Abel wrote. "It seems hopeless merely to be collecting tins. However, we must do what we can and make a start." It has been by attempting the seemingly impossible and persevering that many tropical places have at last been made habitable and healthful. Malaria is no longer the scourge that it used to be, and today Kwato is healthy.

With the work well organized at the head-station, Abel seized the opportunity whenever possible to turn his attention to the out-stations. Miss Parkin came to Kwato on a visit, intending to remain only until the next ship sailed, but she was able to relieve her cousin of so many burdens that when the day of sailing approached she found it hard to put these back on one who was already overburdened. The departure was postponed, and postponed again, until the intended short visit extended to life service for God in New Guinea. Thus it became easier for Abel to make more regular visits to the out-stations without leaving too many responsibilities upon his wife's shoulders.

Travelling in an open whaleboat was slow work. Plans made for these journeys were very much at the mercy of the winds and tides. Abel frequently took advantage of the land breeze that springs up after dark to advance by night. During the southeastern monsoon the early morning often found him travelling to make the most of the only time when calm weather may be relied upon. On one of these journeys he wrote: "To-day the sun went down with a roaring, tearing wind, with rolling white-crested seas swaying and heaving after each other." Sometimes the distances were covered by canoe; the energy and endurance of his paddlers often proving the Papuan's capacity for a prolonged spurt. The following gives a true glimpse of these days:

Slowly at first, and softly, the canoe glides down and into the sea. With a bound the crew are in their places. They shout

"good-bye" to their friends, they dig their paddles in the water and you are away. There is a swing in paddling. Your crew quiet down when the first spurt is over, and number three changes with number eight, and number two threatens to capsize the canoe, so you think, by crawling along the edge to take up a position aft. It is all right; they are trimming the ship. Your sixty-foot dugout is no easy craft to manipulate should you strike a tide rip; and she will do an extra knot an hour if her proud painted prow is a few inches higher out of the water. . . . You go to sleep for an hour or two, and then wake up to find the paddlers still going hard and still in a good temper. You sleep again, and wake again, and so on through the long night. The day dawns: still the same swinging stroke is maintained, and you are within sight of your destination.

All conditions of camping were experienced on these tours. As is to be expected in a tropical country, often many hours were wasted owing to the sudden eclipsing rains. From long isolation in a camp where he had been waiting for the weather to break, Abel wrote:

Rain, rain, rain! Not in heavy showers, but in an impenetrable, unbroken downpour. The ground is covered with broad sheets of jumping water and creeks which are pouring in all directions down to the sea.

He met a varied reception in bringing the Gospel to the chains of Papuan villages dotted along the foreshore, or reaching inland by the side of forest tracks. Sometimes the missionary was avoided, and at other times he was welcomed. Once when taking shelter from the rain under the sloping eaves of a native house, Abel was reminded by the chief of the village, who had shown him all the usual native courtesy, that he had come uninvited, and had better wait for an invitation before visiting them again. This carefully worded rebuff meant a great deal in the mouth of a Papuan. It was the shutting of a door in his face, and it remained closed for many years. Twenty years later the same man, touched by the gift of a sack of rice sent to him in a time of drought and dearth, came to see



Abel, embraced him, and begged his forgiveness. He became a Christian and his village later became the centre of a live Christian community. Simultaneously with rejection from one village there came a message from another: "We are like *suana* (wild, unowned pigs). Will come and cut our ears, and change us into *sarai* (tame pigs)?"

In reply to this call Maanaima, the Samoan teacher and faithful stalwart, was sent with a promise that a teacher would come to help them. Maanaima delivered his message to the leading men of the village, but they seemed uninterested and replied bluntly:

"We don't want *your* teacher. Taubada will send us a teacher from Kwato.

"That is the same," said Maanaima. "I come from Kwato. Taubada has sent me."

The people seemed dubious and, after taking counsel together, one of them said:

"You are the teacher who used to be at Bou. It was you who interfered with the *haitabu*" (sacred stone). Some years previously Maanaima had been warned that if he took the *haitabu* in his hands it would cause his leg to swell and he would die. He gave a public demonstration that this was a fallacy, but he left the district shortly afterwards and had not returned since. In the intervening years he had put on weight and become exceedingly stout.

"Yes," said Maanaima. "I was the teacher who touched the *haitabu*. Did it hurt me? Did it kill me? Did it give me a swollen leg?"

"A swollen leg!" they all exclaimed. "A swollen body! You are swollen all over!"

Primitive people, thus haunted by their fears and living sordid lives in dirty villages, offered the soil for the sowing of the Gospel seed. Abel once wrote of them:

Poor souls, so satisfied with their miserable dirty existence and so unwilling to change it for anything better. . . . With the clear blue sea washing their coral-bound shores within a

few feet of their houses, with cool, pure mountain streams running out into bays in or near every village, there is no excuse for the unspeakable filth in which these people live. There is only one explanation to give: they like dirt. And alas! the Papuan is no cleaner in his mind than he is in his body. I have landed at a village sometimes and have been welcomed by the people and have sat among them and spoken of the love of God to them; and as I have done my work, face to face with my begrimed, sore-stricken, skin-diseased, reeking congregation my heart has sickened, and the temptation has come to me to cut my words and my visit short and to get into my boat and go on to the next village. . . . I was one day reproved by the thought that Christ must often have worked among very dirty people in the slums of Jerusalem. Probably some of the children He blessed and upon whose heads He placed His kind hands, were unwashed and unattractive.

Much of the district work was disappointing and called for patient plodding, and great faith. "It is like a wilderness, with just a spring of water feebly flowing here and there. Let it be a garden of the Lord," he prays. "This must be His desire. He has promised: 'The wilderness and solitary place shall be glad: the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose.' May we live to see it, and rejoice together."

Abel's lifelong prayer was for patience, a gift which was not his naturally and one with which his Papuan friends seemed to be over-endowed. At the out-stations, and among the *ekalesia* groups that comprised the infant church he had often to contend with the Papuan's reluctance to lead, or even to protest against glaring offences. There was lack of moral courage, baffling complacency and apparently sheer inability to take any initiative step without continual suggestion and coaxing from the missionary. After any long absence it was always necessary to have a general clean-up and stirring up in an *ekalesia* community. The Christians lapsed into an inert condition of spiritual life with incredible speed. Abel's travail for the welfare of these babes in the faith was expressed in many jottings in the note-book which he always carried and in which his

own personal comments and memoranda of his work were written.

Everything topsy-turvy. Just what you might expect from Papuans allowed to go their own gait. The *ekalesia* are feeble. We need the Holy Spirit here, with tongues of fire and a rushing mighty wind.

The great need everywhere was for leadership, a crying need, which showed more and more of the absolute necessity for the intensive training such as was given at Kwato. Authority was unknown in the social system existing in this part of the country. So-called chiefs gained their position largely by force of personality, and their varying importance was on account of land ownership. They had a corresponding leadership in feasts and ceremonies and in the affairs of the community. Any deference paid to them was merely such as is due to all older men in a country where old men are more or less feared because they usually dabble in sorcery. As Abel wrote:

The tribe is split up into small villages and the villages into families, and the heads of families are more or less on an equality. Orders are generally given in an apologetic tone of voice. A man finds it safer to throw out a suggestion to his boy that he should run and fetch him something that he wants. The boy may object, and the man's dignity suffers if the order has been imperative.

Diary footnotes on certain of the appointed Papuan leaders reveal some of the problems which the missionary faced. "He is a good fellow," he writes of one, "but he missed the discipline necessary to shake the sloth out of the bones of the Papuan." Another whose lack of seamanship proved expensive to the mission was referred to as "not a born sailor. I fear he is a born idiot, and we haven't opened that yet!"

Sometimes an even greater problem was the insufficiency of the wives of those who had to stand as leaders of their Christian neighbours.

Unspiritual women there too often were, self-righteous and quarrelsome, yet doing their best to take their places as *ekalesia*

wives. Abel made brief but candid jottings in his note-book as he dealt, one by one, with the shortcomings of these faltering members of his flock. "She is just a hair-combed heathen," he wrote sadly of one: and of another: "His wife is the limit. She is a cat—with apologies to the cat!"

The situation at some of the out-stations, where ignorant men, striving to live according to the little light they had, were bearing responsibility for those still more ignorant, brought out the following comment:

So many powerless men, 'having the form of godliness but denying the power thereof.' . . . Weak as their witness is, they are yet His by confession of faith. We cannot doubt their salvation. Our concern must be to lead them into richer knowledge of the power of the Holy Spirit in their lives. . . . That experience must first be ours.

We must fight to win, and take temporary defeat as it comes. It is not our warfare, but Christ's, and however dark our present experiences may seem, we know that under such a Captain as ours victory is certain in the end.

Disappointments in various parts of the district were offset by bright results that were beginning to be manifest in the new system being developed at Kwato. Educationally, they were reaching new standards. They began to teach English in the schools, which meant the opening of new horizons for the boys and girls. Their restricted unwritten mother-tongue only served them for a few coastal miles so that a grasp of English was their only hope of mental growth. The children, with a linguistic adaptability that is truly Papuan, easily picked up the oddities and irregularities of the *dimdim* tongue. The real difficulty that had to be overcome was a matter of native etiquette which made it highly disrespectful to address foreigners in their own tongue. When Lord Lamington, then Governor of Queensland, visited Kwato, he was impressed by the painful determination to overcome ideas that were too deeply-seated to be thrown off lightly. He later sent a gift to the mission to be devoted to the teaching of English, always an important plank in the educational system at Kwato.

The influence of the trainers was beginning to be felt throughout the district. One day Abel received from Government headquarters an extract from the report of one of their patrol officers who had come unawares upon a little station where the leaders were Boru and her husband, Piri, firstfruits of the new régime. "The young woman in charge showed me into a spotlessly clean room," wrote the patrol officer. "There was a class of clean little girls with their hair parted, all plying their needles on the verandah. I was struck with wonderment. I concluded this was one of the Kwato girls."

Long visits to various parts of the district, with a big party of young people from Kwato, helped to demonstrate a new and vigorous life to the people and made a great impression. During such visits medical aid was given and meetings and classes were held at each place. Athletic sports were also introduced among the children and young people. These sports played an important part in breaking down diffidence and reserve, and even in overcoming Papuan self-consciousness, which was one of the chief barriers to progress. Wherever there was any difficulty in cajoling the children to play, some Kwato boys would set the example and the others would soon join them.

On moonlight evenings the Kwato choir would sing to those gathered round, mystified by the harmony of part-singing, which was entirely new to them. Occasionally the musical efforts were greeted with spontaneous applause. Abel remarked, in describing one of these scenes: "It was not so much the music that had taken hold of the people as the fact that my wife came out in front with a white baton and vigorously conducted!"

On some of these tours, the party including Mrs. Abel, their two children and as many helpers from Kwato as possible, they would travel from place to place, making it their aim to enter into the everyday life of the people. The tours were full of incident and not without their anxieties. Abel wrote:

Moving in this climate with two delicate children is a responsible undertaking. Yesterday morning was dead calm with an oily sea and the heat intense. The sun rose like a ball of fire.

We waited until ten o'clock before a slight ripple in the sea broke the stifling air and made it possible for us to take Phyllis and Cecil on board without risk. We could not forget we were starting upon a journey along the ground we covered nine years ago and which cost us the precious life of our child.

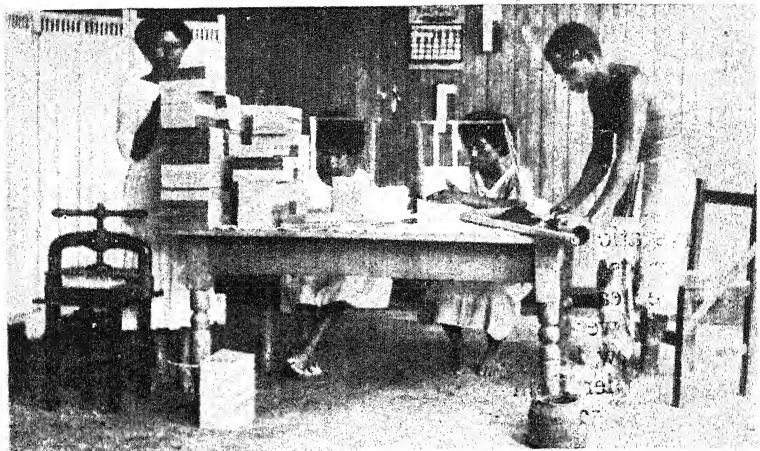
*Lilihoa.* Sunday: Crowded gatherings at the services. Many people having to sit outside the wide doors of the ample church. It would be impossible to gather together a more interesting congregation. Men were there painted in the brightest vermilion stripes and besmeared and befeathered from head to foot. Twelve years ago Daniela's wife, with seven other natives of Higebae, were killed and eaten by a party led by Dilomi of Logea, now Paulo, a deacon of my church at Kwato. Three years earlier Walker was unable to land on account of the hostile appearance of the natives. The mission visit had to be deferred.

8 P. M. We had a quiet helpful hour together round the Lord's Table. How this sweet, simple memorial unites those who love it! There are no nationalities within the Church, and we, English, Samoans, and Papuans came together in oneness of heart, in remembrance of Him in whose name we found ourselves cast together.

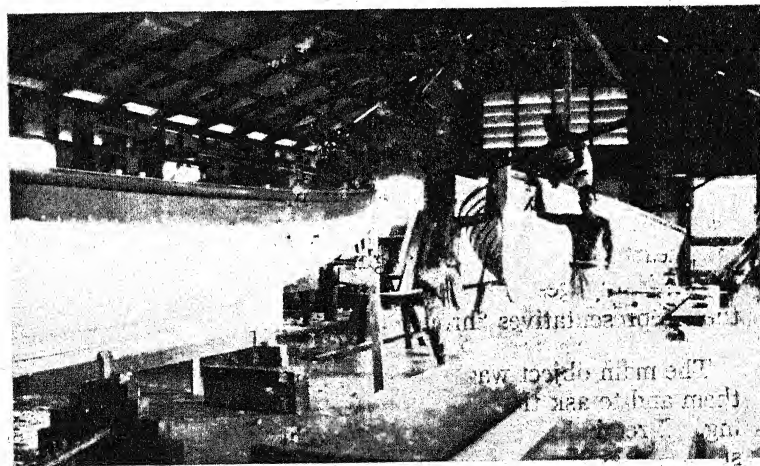
The arrival of the party at a village or at an out-station always brought a crowd together out of curiosity. The Abel children created a great deal of interest and wonder, and were a good point of contact with the people. Wistfully inspecting the small, well-nourished son, an old man's laconic remark was: "We used to relish infants of that age!" When some members of a heathen community brought a present of yams and taros, as a friendly gesture, Abel was greatly pleased and spoke to their representatives through an interpreter.

It was our duty to express our feeling of friendship for the natives, and that in return we might claim their good feeling. I reminded them that it was their custom to regard all strangers as enemies. We came in the name of Christ who wanted all men to be brothers, and we could not deliver our message acceptably until they regarded us in a friendly spirit. I was grateful because this was a sign of good feeling and because





BINDING THE SUAU GOSPEL OF ST. JOHN.



THE BOAT-BUILDING SHOP AT KWATO.

TWO OF THE USEFUL MISSI ON INDUSTRIES



1941

1942

1943

1944

1945

it was the first sign of this I had received from them. We had the greatest of all gifts to give them; and very briefly I told them the story of God's love in Christ Jesus.

If these journeys were not always crowned with the highest results they always brought joy to the missionaries in the opportunities they afforded of getting near the people and of helping them. At the end of a busy day wrote:

Experienced tonight that sweet, tingling feeling peculiar to those who spend their strength for Christ. To become physically wearied in doing God's work brings no peevishness, nor discontent, nor irritation. It is a peaceful business. After our work was done today we went down to the beach alone and sat there in the silence of the glorious night and thanked God with very full hearts for all that the day had been to us, for its opportunities, for its hopefulness.

Work now began to extend inland, beyond the foothills that rise from the foreshore. A site for a station was cleared on the mountains at the head of Milne Bay. "Yams as big as cooking-pots!" predicted the owner of the land, an ancient and shrewd old Papuan who had taken a great liking to Taubada. The new hill station proved a wonderful asset as a health resort for the mission. The first time the whole party camped there they landed by canoe at midnight, and set off in single file into the forest by torchlight and moonlight. A long line of carriers bearing all their gear and the children, shoulder high, wended their way along the bush track and up the steep mountain ridges. When dawn lit the tops of the tall forest trees they beat out their palm-leaf torches, arriving at their camp at sunrise, to breathe with great delight the cool air from the mountains. A house had been built hastily of green timber cut from the surrounding bush, bound with split cane, with a rattan floor, and walls and thatch of sago-palm. All hands set to work immediately to furnish the house, and before the day was over tables and chairs had been made from neatly cut wood; rustic bedsteads had been made and sprung with interwoven cane.

The dense virgin forest had recently been cleared off the site, and from its margin there swarmed insects of every known and unknown variety, lured by curiosity, to inspect the new mushroom settlement. Wherever trees were felled and the undergrowth cut away, vistas of glorious mountain scenery were opened up. The sweet pungent bush scents and the cool air at night brought great enjoyment to the campers. Duabo was a much-loved spot with its mists and its views and the brow of the last hill was crowned with a totally different climate from that at the sea level. It almost rivalled Kwato in Abel's affections. Maboiani's prophecies about the phenomenal yams were fulfilled, at least in spirit. "Didn't I tell you!" the toothless old man would exclaim in later years when a station was established and he came to see the missionaries and noted their appreciation of the property.

Abel was a man to whom the sympathy and backing of friends at home was indispensable. He was rich in the number of those who trusted him and whose loyalty meant much to him in his struggles to bring the light of God to the Papuans.

"You are not really alone in Kwato, and your anxieties are shared," wrote a friend in England. "You don't know how many people love you, and will struggle to see you through. . . . God bless you and preserve you, and make His face to shine upon you." The light dawned slowly, as the pioneer wrote:

Already it is working, silently but forcibly. A conscience has been stirred, and here and there awakened, against lewd language and cruelty and vicious habits. The gross darkness of heathenism is being dispelled. How anxiously we have watched for the night to pass! How often have our eyes strained to catch the first gleams of the coming day! Hope has come out of the heavens. Faint at first, but ever increasing, the light has shot its ray through the black night. "*The morning cometh.*" God speed the day!

## XI

### OVERCOMING NEW DIFFICULTIES

PERSISTENT malaria, and the strain that Abel's wide range of work was putting upon him, had left him nervously run down. In spite of this, when contemplating a second journey to England in 1909, he wrote: "We don't know how to leave, how possibly to be away for a year." Life in New Guinea had been a period of very real strife. Apart from the problems that the work presented, he had to fight for his views, and for official sanction to put them into practice. Each new venture called for a launching forth that Abel was always more ready to undertake than his Directors were to approve. The financial state of affairs in the Society had necessitated a policy very different from the free rein they had previously been willing to allow him. Grants were cut down and an attitude of extreme caution marked the administration.

"On our present lines," Abel wrote to a friend on the Board, "Abram would never have left Ur. It may be good business, but it is poor faith. . . . I much prefer the faith that goes into debt to that which only trusts God for what you have in hand."

There had been a great deal of financial responsibility. "My industrial work is only second fiddle here," Abel wrote, "and as long as it is educative it has to suffer financially." Even the sawmill had a chequered career, and at one time, came near proving a failure. The sudden death of a friend in Scotland who was providing for this project left Abel in considerable debt and more than once he wrote: "I am in a tight corner with my mill; I must wait upon the Lord and be of good courage." Reviewing the many obstacles that had confronted him, he said: "What is the use of trial if we don't use it? I think that all this is sent merely to try my faith, and should be a time of growth for me."

One by one these difficulties "ironed themselves out," so that by the time he was planning an overdue furlough he was able to write to the Directors: "The mill has been a great success. It has succeeded in the highest sense, in developing the faculties and character of our young men. Financially, it has also been a decided success. . . . I do not require a penny to square up the past."

What was troubling him most at this time was the fact that the work was on too small a scale. If Kwato was to be of any real force for the good of the Papuan people, its benefits must be made available to a larger section of the community. He argued that this was the psychological moment for a helping hand to be extended to a people fast becoming overwhelmed by the impact of new forces. Much of the village life was already breaking up. The stage seemed to be set for a repetition of the fate of many a backward race that has been pushed aside in the too rapid development of new countries. Commercial enterprise was making great strides. Just at that time there was what almost amounted to a rush for land. Abel's plans for the future were urgent. "I am responsible for what I see (he wrote to a supporter); I am not, as you know, satisfied with our pace on this side. This is our opportunity. Tomorrow we shall have lost the chance of laying immovable foundations."

A wider scheme of industries included agriculture and was directly to affect the people at various centres throughout the district. Knowing well the objections that would be raised, he wrote home preparing the way:

The work we are anxious to do is no experiment. We have passed that stage. I ask that this work shall be regarded as part of the necessary mission work of this district, and that the Directors shall not be ashamed of it because, incidentally, it will bring in revenue.

Abel was too near his work to realize its success as others did. As the day of sailing approached, many friends in New Guinea expressed their good wishes and their warm appreciation of his service in the country. One well-wisher was Sir

Evan James, who had stayed at Kwato in the course of his very extensive travels and had become a thorough convert to missions. "In your Christian methods of training the Papuan you have no more willing and energetic supporter than myself," he wrote.

"Kwato is to us an ideal; an inspiration; and an aid to faith," wrote the Chairman of a sister society working in the country. Gratifying as these tributes were, the good wishes of his own colleagues, perhaps, meant most to him. "We place on record our gratification with the spiritual results of the work at Kwato," reads a resolution passed by the District Committee at this time; the Rev. J. H. Holmes wrote from Urika: "I trust that we out here may be cheered and strengthened to push on until we can take home such a story of cheer as yours must be."

The party that travelled to England now included three children, and Boru, their devoted nurse. While waiting for the steamer in Sydney, Abel stayed with a prominent Christian friend who was interested in Kwato. There was much to unburden, and Abel welcomed the opportunity to thrash out his views with another. They talked for long hours of the problems of the work and of ambitions for the future. This friend became so captivated by the story of the twenty years in New Guinea that he promised to finance the extension of the work so as to enable Abel to do, from various centres throughout the district, what had been done at Kwato. Abel was brimming with joy. It seemed to him that his most cherished hopes were to be fulfilled, but he spent much time in prayer before he would accept the offer. He also wrote to the senior boys at Kwato who occupied a prominent place in his vision for the future, and who were to be brought more and more into the place of responsibility.

Abel now had a concrete plan to bring before the Board in London and to convince the Directors of its value, he was prepared to throw the whole weight of his personality into this task. The journey was broken by a few weeks in France, where their old friend Dr. Loria came to see them. Abel was

amused to hear his wife mystify the railway officials by lapsing unconsciously from French into voluble Suau. Boru liked France because there the people did not stare so much at her as they did at her English guardians.

A letter from Dr. Wardlaw Thompson greeted Abel at Marseilles: "When you come home we shall give you a hearty welcome, though I hear that you have some most alarming scheme on hand which you expect to persuade the Directors to accept." A tearing gale in the Channel and the white cliffs of Dover at last brought Abel face to face with this task.

Some of Abel's greatest earthly pleasures were derived from the simple joys of friendship. There were many happy reunions in these first days in England; luncheons and dinners with one and another, and long talks by the fireside in the homes of his old cronies. He had a circle of loyal friends, some of whom were on the Directorate of the mission. "How am I to vote?" they would ask him, when questions arose relating to New Guinea. They would stand up for him in committee, not because they always saw eye to eye with him, but because they knew him and believed in him. "Trust us to keep your flag flying. . . . Let us know all there is to know, and we'll hustle round on your behalf," one had written to him.

Abel was a popular missionary speaker, and a full programme of speaking engagements kept him travelling from one end of the United Kingdom to the other. He sought to rouse the churches to a sense of their responsibility for the cause that, he believed, should be the church's deepest concern, saying:

Will the day ever come when the Church becomes aware of her great opportunity, when she realizes the purpose of her existence, when she gladly and thoroughly spends herself in the carrying out of the Master's orders, when men and women go forth in hundreds where they now go forth in tens?

The world is sending its ambassadors into these regions in ever increasing numbers. Great zeal and energy are being shown by men whose sole interest in the native is a selfish one. The Church is not making a corresponding effort. The opportunity is yours today.



Before the Board of the Mission Abel stood to plead his case for industrial work. Among those that he addressed there were some staunch backers, and their sympathy gave him confidence. He told the story of Kwato. He outlined the circumstances that made the mission a necessity. He described the break-up of the old social system and the influx of new influences.

Our white civilization had burst upon the native with disastrous suddenness. . . . We are doing what we can to educate him in such a way that his Christian faith may express itself through a life of usefulness and responsibility. He has responded with quite unexpected capacity to the slight effort which has been made to train him in technical knowledge. We are now arranging for a development of this work which will give him a recognized and important part in the development of his country.

This thing is certain, if he does not become an intelligent part of the new progressive force which is making itself felt in New Guinea, that same force is going, in a very few years, to crush him out of existence.

Abel believed that the system he was advocating would not only result in a strong and independent Papuan Christian community, but would also be the means of saving the race from ultimate extinction. He quoted the opinions of former administrators. Sir William MacGregor, then Governor of Queensland, had held up Kwato as an example and advised other missions to follow the same methods. "You will save the race through the remnant of the race," said Captain F. R. Barton, another ex-Governor, after visiting Kwato and seeing the colony in training there. Abel appealed to the Directors to restore the grand old word "enterprise" to the missionary vocabulary. "This," he said, "is not merely an undertaking, or we might be content to be undertakers." And this was precisely what he believed would be the case unless action were taken to stem the currents that were sweeping these primitive races off their feet, and unless practical aid were given that would assist their readjustment.

There were many objections to be overcome. Dr. Wardlaw Thompson had grown older and more cautious since the early days when he had been prepared to give Abel his way with regard to his first industrial efforts. It was feared that the enlargement of the industrial scope would create awkward precedents, and uneven distribution of privilege that other stations might be inclined to resent. Abel pointed out that most areas in New Guinea were not so exposed to the impact of alien forces as the Kwato district, inundated as it was with foreigners—European, Asiatic and Polynesian. Dr. Thompson also distrusted the system of the segregation of children from normal village life and said that he feared Abel was “wrapping his natives in cotton-wool,” and was losing sight of his original aim of independence for the Christian Papuan. Time alone was to discount these fears. These criticisms, however, as far as the L. M. S. Secretary was concerned, merely revealed the thorough weighing that he gave to the whole question. Once convinced, his support was the more valuable, and it was whole-hearted.

Finally Abel retired from the debate and sat in the lobby of the mission house to await the verdict. Members of the committee came from all parts of the country and, as they ploughed through the agenda, began to think of late trains north, west, and to the south coast. At last Dr. Thompson emerged from the board room, seized Abel's hand and shook it warmly, saying: “Abel, I congratulate you! You have full sanction to go ahead, but you never would have got it, had not the hour been so late.” Members of the board were now pouring out, grabbing hats, coats and bags, and hurrying into the street. Overflowing with joy, Abel passed out in the crowd with the doxology in his heart. That night he and his wife discussed the vista that lay ahead and talked till late of the future with its dreams coming true.

Deputation work and many preparations to carry out the new venture, fully occupied Abel's time. His family saw less and less of him, and often, on his visits to their temporary home in London, he would arrive at 10 P. M. after a strenuous day,

walk straight upstairs to the crib where the new baby lay, wake her up and spend half an hour playing with her before returning her to her slumbers. Protests were of no avail. His youngest daughter was his cherished toy almost from the day of her birth in England, and readily accommodated herself to her father's whims.

Boru, who had never experienced a temperature lower than 72° Fahrenheit in her life, revelled in the cold English winter. She never caught cold or missed her early morning cold plunge. Boru made a great impression when she spoke in public, using her own language, which Abel would translate into English. On one occasion she was addressing a Sunday school of unruly, jeering children from poor parts of Sheffield, whose teachers seemed quite unable to control them. In broken English she paused to give her audience the good scolding that their teachers had been too timid to administer. The children in her country, she told them, had better manners, and would not openly laugh at white strangers, however queer they might appear. Having restored order to some extent, she continued her address in Suau.

At another time Boru spoke at a crowded missionary demonstration at Westminster Chapel with Abel at her elbow interpreting. "We are dark in our country, and ignorant," she began, "but some of you children have loved us for Christ's sake, and have brought His light to us." There was something poignant in her simple words that caused a sensation in the packed building. Here was a daughter of cannibals, reared in heathenism, wearing the tattoo marks of her tribe, rescued by missionaries from the ill-treatment of her people. Her very presence was a powerful missionary sermon.

Of all the strange things that Boru saw on her travels, London fascinated her most. It was then a city of horse-omnibuses, and handsome cabs. The slow, thundering traffic of the London streets made a great impression upon her, but above all else she was captivated by the soldiers; the Life Guards with their gorgeous accoutrements and proud horses; the well-known pagantry of London. State processions and military bands

produced every kind of Papuan ejaculation: "*Io! E-wa! Ae!*" she would cry out in wonder.

For years afterwards Boru regaled her friends in New Guinea with the stories of the things she had seen, and they never tired of hearing her tell of adventures in England. With a far-away look in her eyes she usually ended her narratives by humming snatches from military marches she had picked up. The *Soldiers' Chorus* from Faust always recaptured for her some of the essence of that vanished experience.

Holding the fort at Kwato, Miss Parkin was having a strenuous and difficult time. The whole community had been stricken down with a succession of epidemics, whooping-cough, measles, and dysentery. She gave herself night and day to nursing the sick, and every room in the mission house that could be spared was turned into a hospital ward. The Abels, anxious to relieve her of a long and single-handed fight, were making final preparations to leave England and were bidding their friends good-bye. A passage had been booked for an assistant worker—one of the first steps in the new industrial scheme that was to be launched on their return. Two days before sailing a cablegram was handed to Abel from the friend in Australia who was standing behind the plan of industrial extension. It bore the brief message: "Cost prohibits." In a moment their hopes were exploded and their plans ruled out by a single stroke. Abel was dumbfounded. They believed that the way had been made clear by God. The victory in the Board had been won. And now, when they were about to enter the newly-opened door, it had been shut in their faces.

Dr. Thompson was horrified when he heard the news. "After all that has been said and done, you must go through with it somehow," he said. "Carry on in faith, and hope for the best," was his advice. This they were prepared to do. Enough money was provided to enable them to take the initial steps, and they sailed away from England, with the new assistant, not knowing what lay ahead, but looking steadfastly to God to see them through.

The decision of the London Missionary Society with regard

to industries had already reached the press in Australia. Abel had the sanction of the authorities at home, and liberty to extend and finance his work independently of the mission, but was yet without the prospect of the funds required to carry out his definite plans.

In the short space of time that Abel waited in Sydney for an island steamer, a complete unfolding of the train of events of the past year occurred, and the way opened ahead for the future of the industrial scheme. Partly through the remarks of a fellow passenger, and chiefly through the instrumentality of Mr. J. B. Nicholson, of Sydney, Abel was introduced to a group of friends with the result that the venture was undertaken by a concern which called itself the "Enesi." The name was coined from the initials of the principal shareholders, as being an easy pronunciation for the natives whom they were seeking to help. These Christian business men were interested in the Kwato experiment and wished to make an investment where their money would bring benefit and Christian influence to the Papuans. A large percentage of the profits was to be allotted to the mission. As one of them wrote: "We are not looking for an investment so much as the privilege of sharing a good work." Once more the door stood open wide, and in the strange circumstances of its opening Abel had the joy of seeing the evidence of God's overruling, and a vindication of the faith by which he had sailed, with plans unaltered, from England six weeks earlier. Cheering letters from Kwato met the family in Sydney. The boys and girls were all pulling their weight and were anxious to greet their friends with only good news. Abel communicated the sequel of his efforts to headquarters, and reported all clear ahead, saying: "We go back full of hope."

A return to Kwato was always a joyful experience. Some of the happiest moments of Abel's life were spent on the deck of a ship watching familiar landmarks come into view after long absence: the contours of the well-loved hills, the points and promontories, the island passage through which the steamer would thread her way and at last, the goal—Kwato! And this home-coming was no exception.

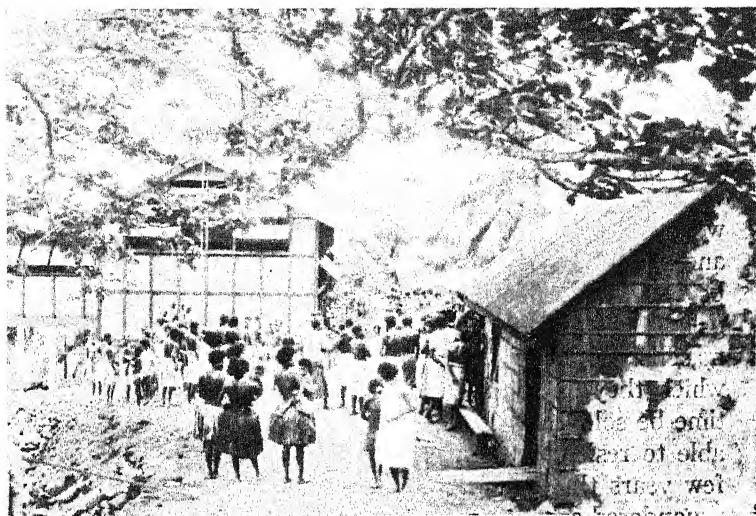
Early in 1911 Abel began to plant coconut-groves for the Enesi. These were to bring the advantages of Kwato to a wider circle of people, and would enable Kwato-trained men to carry on their work so that they could lead and influence their neighbours. Land at this time could not be purchased, but was freely offered for the purpose. The people in the district were alarmed at the increasing number of "white" plantations

I were growing apprehensive lest their land might gradually be alienated from them. They were therefore beginning to guard their ancestral possessions jealously. A community had no sense of security that the land on which they lived, and from which they drew their crops of vegetables, might not at any time be taken over their heads should the actual owners be unable to resist the temptation to temporary enrichment. In a moment they would lose the money that had purchased their land would be squandered and the people would find themselves without their land and without the knives, tomahawks, tobacco, rice and calico which an improvident title-holder in their community had exchanged it. An old chief<sup>1</sup> at Koeabule had the foresight to see that the land he was offering to the mission would be secured permanently for the benefit of his descendants. He argued the matter in great detail to Abel: "I give it, yet I keep it for my children and my grandchildren. No one can sell it when I am gone."

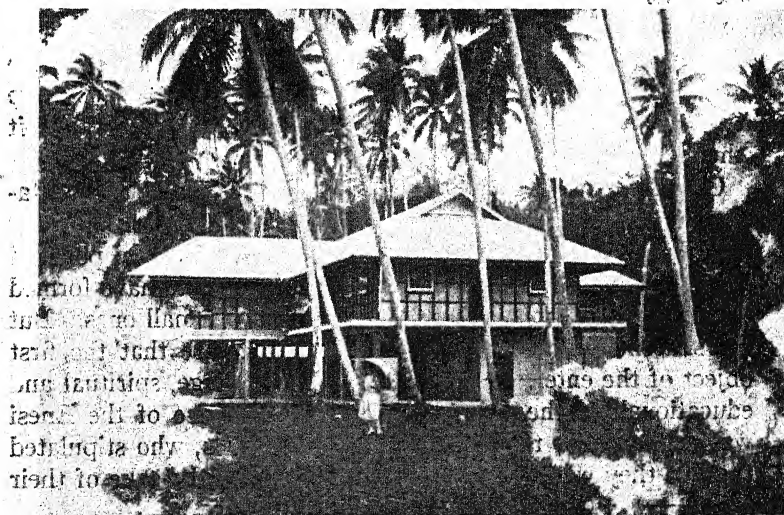
Christians from various parts of the district came as deputations from their people, begging Abel to begin work on their land and promising to help him. From a commercial point of view it would have been far more advantageous to have formed one large plantation rather than a number of small ones. But the shareholders of the Enesi were well aware that the greatest object of the mission was to be the advantage of the people, and that, as explained to the owners of the properties, the mission was that, as they were parting with their land for the sake of the

<sup>1</sup> Eventually this man became a Christian. "I have given my land to God, now I offer myself," were his words when he came to seek the way of salvation.





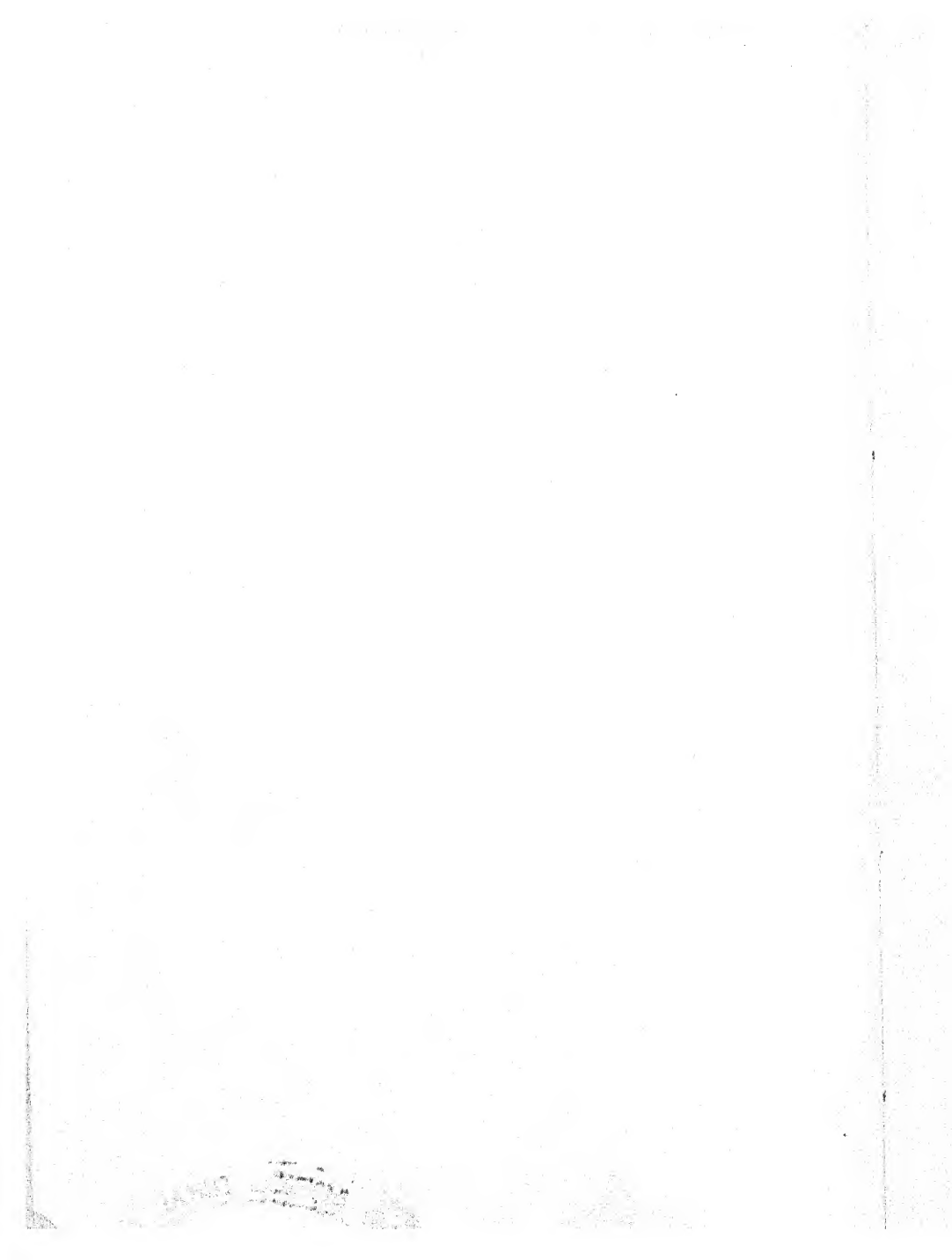
OPENING THE NEW SCHOOL BUILDING AT KIWITONGA



THE MISSION HOSPITAL AT KIWITONGA

TWO OF THE VALUABLE MISSION ACTIVITIES



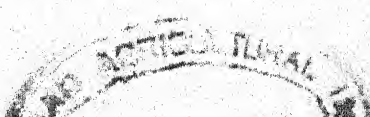


children, they did so in good faith that it would not revert to the open market, or be re-sold indiscriminately to the *dimdim*.

The native's enthusiasm was marked. A start was made at Kanakope. "I invited a hundred workers, and a hundred and thirty responded, some coming on foot a distance of thirty miles in the rain," Abel wrote. "The Papuan is always at his best if he is put on his mettle. Any situation calling for unusual effort, any sudden emergency, will make the poorest-spirited of them shine. A wonderful people in a crux."

The whole family camped in a district while these operations were being carried on. Special meetings were held for the gangs of workers and their retinues, and classes for their wives and children. Twice a week magic lantern services were held and sports were provided every afternoon. The workers found themselves in contact with a new life so that, as Abel wrote, none of those people would go back to their villages in doubt as to what is the Christian, healthy, all-round life to which they were called in the name of Christ, and to which they could aspire in their own village life.

At Koeabule, where they next began work, the teacher in charge reported that the mission compound, which bordered on the new estate, had for the past two months become a rendezvous of men and women from adjacent villages who had hitherto kept aloof. Between three and four hundred people were camped on the beach, while they were felling the forest, burning off, and clearing the land. The work went on apace, and much faster than was anticipated. They were "slogging in," as he described it, "with a yell, and a shout and a big crowd." All day the whoops and cries that accompany all Papuan energies could be heard, while the forest crashed before the onslaught of axes and knives. Mountain ranges came into view as the towering trees that had screened them were laid low. Columns of smoke from the burning off rose up to the sky all day. Abel revelled in the work and in the holiday spirit in which it was tackled, and in the many Papuan friendships that sprang up in the course of the long days out in the sun. "I am more than satisfied, and deeply grateful. Things look so hope-



ful," he wrote of the new spirit that this venture seemed to have inspired among the people. Jo, indispensable as ever, and trusted largely with the oversight of the work, wrote from Koeabule, where he had set things going before Abel's arrival: "Now we are reaching the people. This door is opened by God."

Once more the caravan moved up to Duabo. Carriers bearing household gear and baggage were strung out in a line. Cane chairs, lashed together with a little thatched roof over the top made an ideal carriage for the children, borne high on bamboo poles. The ascent was made by night and at each village natives crowded round with blazing torches, to peer into the little roofed-in crib that held the children.

Abel was a great walker, and never lacked energy, so that the inaccessibility of Duabo never isolated him from his work on the shore. With his family settled in the cooler climate of the hills, and as much of the Kwato school as possible transplanted there, he was within easy access to the newer developments of his work and made the round of the district regularly. The return to the hilltop, after these tours, was always a great joy. After a long tramp and a late and strenuous climb, he would at last pick out the lights of home through gaps and clearings in the forest. When he reached the base of the final hill, cold Duabo air would meet him, exhilarating and refreshing; and as he gained the hilltop he received the uproarious welcome from his family, both white and brown.

Abel loved Duabo. Here everything was different: the climate, the scenery, the scents and sounds. Even the birds were not the same as the familiar bird-life of the coast and islands. Sometimes towards evening thick, white mist would creep up from the valleys until it enveloped the whole range of hills. Early in the morning this mist would roll off the hills, and one by one the mountain peaks would pierce the fleecy white clouds that had shrouded them. Standing at the brow of the hill, Abel would look down upon a large portion of his district, rolled out like a map at his feet. Deep in prayer, he would pace up and down at night along the edge of the hill that sloped away

abruptly. Thus he would pray through his plans, remembering each place in turn, with its peculiar needs. Duabo became a prayer station, like a watchtower, from which at night he could see the lights of the out-stations encircling the long bay.

This was the scene of many of Abel's struggles with the translation of Scripture. He approached the work with great solemnity, saying: "I am determined to start in and finish the New Testament in *Suau*. Even a poor translation is better than none, and the Holy Spirit can inspire a translator as well as an original writer. *He* must do the work through us." An early extract from his journal at the time of his first attempts at translation, reveals something of what this work meant.

Translating all the evening. I approached the Sermon on the Mount again with a feeling of great awe. I spent more than an hour over the phrase "poor in spirit" with McLaren's sermon in mind. There is no equivalent in *Suau*, of course, but a language formed, as this so often is, of words made up of a sentence, gave Dagoela and me an answer to our special prayer in arriving at, *se nuatudobidobinoidi*; literally, "those who think themselves down." It implies humility; it is an act of self-belittlement. It will be easy to read poverty of spirit into this term. I am delighted with the discovery.

His pundit, Dagoela, was an old man of exceptional capacity, with the gracious manner of the older *Suau* generation, whose strange expressions of primitive courtesy, obtruse as they seemed, are regrettably absent in succeeding generations. This translation was slow and exacting work. Often several days were spent in wrestling over a few verses.

We have to introduce new words (Abel wrote), or strain the vernacular, as soon as we attempt to deal with abstract ideas. It is next to impossible to convey direct to the minds of our people such ideas as virtue, holiness, sanctification, and redemption. It is doubtful whether, for instance, "The just shall live by faith," is directly translatable into any of our dialects.

With all these difficulties he felt the supreme importance and

value of this work. To the Rev. A. P. Campbell, in Sydney, who followed the details of his work with affectionate interest, he once wrote: "I have finished the translation of Romans. I really do feel proud. For years I have thought of this, and now that it is an accomplished fact I feel I have lived to some purpose."

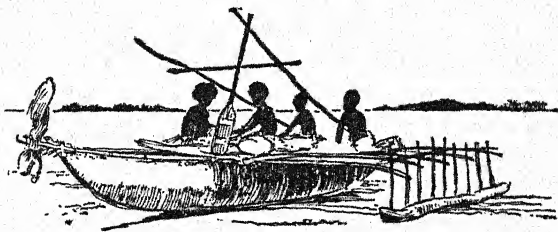
An important epoch in the history of the mission was the building of the motor launch *Mamari*. This trim white craft with her varnished lines marked the end of the toilsome rowing days. The *Olive Branch* had been wrecked in a storm within sight of the mission house at Kwato some ten years earlier. Since that day open whaleboats had been the only means of transport. The uncertainties of sailing were things of the past from the moment the new fifty-foot launch, with flags flying, had slid from her bearings into the water. Until a boat is actually afloat her appearance is always a matter of uncertainty, but the *Mamari* rejoiced all who shared the responsibility of her. As Jo had borne a lion's share of this she was a crowning testimonial to the unusual latent capacity that Abel claimed was the Papuan's. For twenty years the *Mamari* gave tireless service to the mission, travelling night and day, in all weathers, and only resting when repairs necessitated a haul-up on the slips. At the end of that period she was sold, and is still at work in Papuan waters.

In 1906 British New Guinea, as the country was originally called, ceased to be a crown colony and was incorporated in the Australian Commonwealth, under the name of Papua. In 1911 a party of fifteen members of the Australian Federal Parliament visited the country with a view to understanding the conditions. At each place native dances were organized in their honour, and the people, putting on their paint and feathers for the benefit of the distinguished visitors, succeeded in giving an impression of irresponsible barbarism. When the Federal party visited Kwato they spent an afternoon inspecting the industries, listening to good part-singing, and watching a keenly contested cricket match. At the banquet, given in honour of the visitors at Samarai that same evening, their spokesman

referred to the contrast they had seen between the painted dancers and the skilled technicians, and declared: "The one condition completely baffles us; in the other we find ourselves dealing with men whom we can regard as our brothers."

Reporting on this part of their tour, the visitors wrote:

We entered a large boat worked by an oil engine. It was steered by a Papuan, and the engine was worked by another Papuan. We were astonished to find that this boat had been built entirely by Papuan boys at the Kwato mission, and that they ran these engines and did all the work themselves. When we got to the mission station we saw a large, well-appointed milling plant in full working order, sawing great logs. We went to a boat-building department and saw a boat being laid down; some of the apprentices were taking out planks and restoring injured parts. . . . When we saw very large bungalows built, to our surprise, by native carpenters trained at the mission, we realized the potentialities of the Papuan, and the great hope there is if we protect them from the evils which would otherwise decimate the population.



AN OUTRIGGER CANOE

## XII

### A NEW DOOR OPENED

THE next five years were years of strife and uncertainty in some directions, and of glorious victory in others. Spiritually they were years of harvest. The Papuan Church was showing signs of growth and vigour. Village Christians were beginning to take more upon themselves. Elders of the Church were organized, and were bearing the responsibility of the spiritual welfare of each village group. "The work is evidently growing and is not dependent upon *us* as it used to be," Abel wrote in 1912. "A large number are, I feel sure, getting their strength from the Fountain Head." Contact with the work did not always make it possible for Abel to have the perspective to realize the deep changes that were going on in the lives of the people. One Sunday he had occasion to speak strongly to the Christians at a meeting held previous to a Communion Service. His words bore traces of disappointment. When he had finished speaking Daniela, one time chief of Lilihoa, rose to his feet and said:

"Your words are true, Taubada, and we hear them. But remember we are very weak, and do not forget what God has done for us. There are scars on my body that my friend inflicted;" and he pointed to Paolo of Logea. "Yet he is my brother. We are one in Christ. A few years ago I longed for vengeance and yearned for his life. I captured and ate his people as he did mine, and as he did my wife. Now we shall soon kneel together and remember how Christ died for us. Because He died, there is no malice in my heart. We are brothers."

This was one of the most dramatic moments in the history of the young Church. There was rapt silence as the sincere old



man spoke, pointing to his one-time enemy. In the course of five years the Church doubled its membership.

The new plantations, though not yet come to bearing, were nevertheless fulfilling their highest and primary object and were, in Abel's opinion, more than justifying themselves. But in spite of all this a storm was brewing over the industrial work at Kwato, and more and more the plantations became a bone of contention. That an integral part of the mission work should be under control of an outside organization was deemed wrong by Abel's colleagues in the country. He also came in for a fusillade of criticism. Finally, at the District Committee meeting on the field it was decided to develop work on industrial lines, and the Enesi agreed to sell their properties to the L.M.S. At the time Abel felt it was best to have one unifying scheme. "The discussion of our industrial affairs took up the best part of four days," he wrote, after Committee was over. "The weather was terribly hot and steamy, and we sat long hours; then, after midnight, we managed to send home a scheme for our future work, which at least has the merit of bringing all our work under one head."

Shortly after this transaction the Society met with financial difficulties and was faced with a large deficit. Naturally the industries were the first to come under the axe. With the plantations half way to bearing, and requiring ceaseless cultivation, Abel found himself already committed to a project which he had, without funds, to carry forward. "I am left stranded," he wrote. "My plans are broken up."

This situation brought about a very real crisis in the history of the work. In the midst of these perplexities he wrote to a friend: "I have had a week's thought and prayer. I wish I could say that I had found some light on my path. I wish I could say that I had faithfully transferred the burden to One who never fails in the hour of need. I have tried to, and to some extent I have succeeded, or I should be at my wits' end by this time."

Nine months is sufficient in Papua to reduce plantation property to an overgrown wilderness. Neglect at a critical time

would have meant present loss, as well as a "throwing away of the past," as Abel pointed out when the whole question of industries was deferred until the arrival of a deputation from London, due in a few years' time. There was also the problem of the boys and girls that the development of the plantations had enabled him to take on, many of whom had been brought up in the mission from infancy. Curtailment of industrial plans meant disbanding, and a backward step seemed radically wrong.

The more we pray about it (he wrote), the more certain we are that we dare not listen to any order to look back. It may cost us a great deal just now to be faithful to the vision God has given us. . . . We never rise from our knees, having cast all the burden of our thoughts and work upon Christ, without feeling that our faith has renewed our youth, so that our difficulties look like enterprises, and without feeling that the call to us is forward. The promise is the blessing of a great reward if we throw our fears away, and trust the Master who sent us here with the promise of this reward—the ingathering of these people to His Kingdom.

The whole question of the special methods that Abel had felt called upon to develop, in view of the peculiar circumstances of the country, was once more in the melting-pot.

I am not working for coconuts (he wrote). But if this venture fails, what is our future? I believe God has called me to do a very special work for the Papuan. For years, in the face of opposition, and on the barest funds, I have been working for the uplift of these people, and the end of all this foundation-laying is in sight. If my life is spared a few more years I can demonstrate something for all time. If I succeed, the administration of the natives in other parts of Papua will have to be undertaken in the light of the facts I shall have demonstrated. . . . If I allow the thing to fall to pieces now, all the past is wrecked, and honestly I see no future for the Papuan.

Pending final decisions, Abel had to carry on somehow, and he organized his work to mark time until the arrival of the

deputation. Kwato was temporarily closed down, and the whole mission was transferred to Milne Bay, principally to Duabo. Here they camped in rough sheds of green timber, quickly thatched with plaited coconut leaves. They managed in this way to live very cheaply, their young people working to produce almost all of their own food in native gardens. Abel's health broke down, and the retreat at Duabo, which he spent translating the Scriptures, proved to be a most opportune provision for his recuperation.

In the midst of all this uncertainty concerning the future his convictions about the importance of the work he was doing remained steadfast. He refused to be daunted by the difficulties that his own vision had brought upon him. In the face of obstacles he wrote to his colleagues: "There is only one way for us to go, and that is *forward*. It will require faith to take this stand. If we haven't faith we must get it from God, or stand aside and make room for others who will."

I don't think God means me to leave these people to flounder into a form of civilization which is grotesque and spurious, but feeling as I do, and seeing as I do, I must use my influence in directing them to a new condition of life which is healthy and sound and progressive.

Thus Abel wrote when the prospect of continuing his special work seemed small.

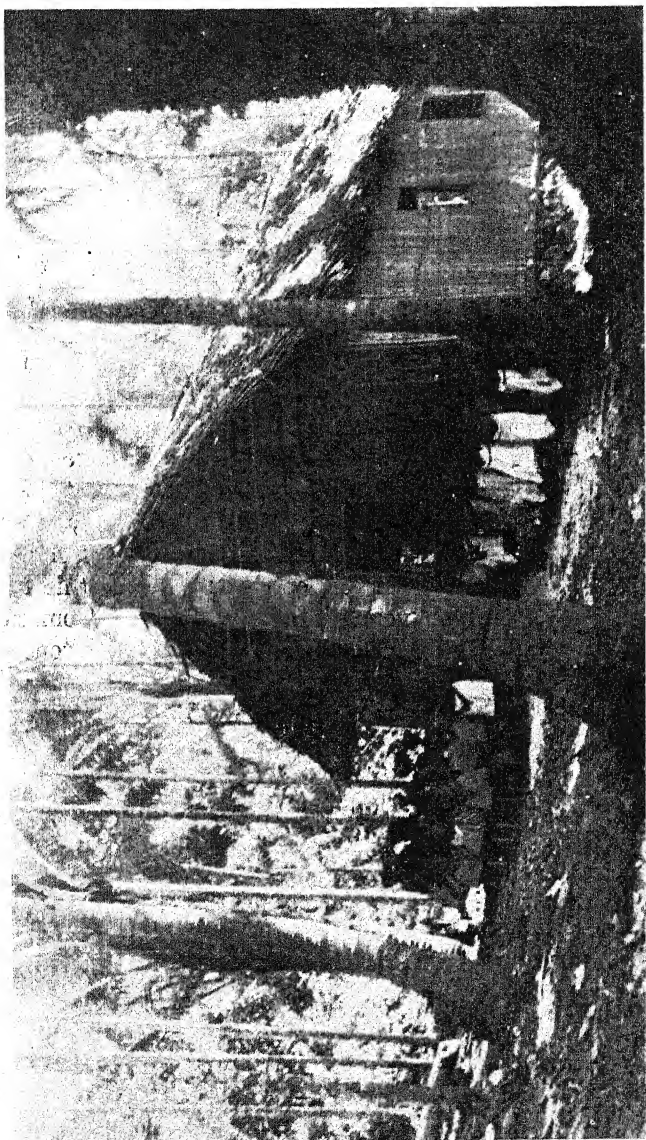
Widespread decrease in the population, one of the fruits of the general upheaval of native life, was a problem that was exercising the minds of both the Government and missions alike. "If things are allowed to go on as they are at present there is nothing but extinction ahead of these people," wrote the Rev. M. K. Gilmour, Chairman of the Methodist Mission. "Matters with us are extremely critical," Abel wrote of the situation—which, however, he did not regard with pessimism.

I have sufficient faith in what I am doing that I am quite enthusiastic and optimistic in tackling the problem. What we have to deal with is a people who, in one generation, have been

rushed through the stone and the iron ages, and who, within my short experience, have put down their spears, and have given up all the old complex machinations of the life handed down to them from time immemorial, and who find themselves today looking at picture shows, and watching the process of wireless telegraphy. Nothing short of an immediate and far-reaching forward movement will save the race. This is no time to be looking back. Everything urges us forward.

At last, in 1916, the Deputation arrived and comprised the Rev. Frank Lenwood, A. J. Viner, and the Rev. G. J. Williams. Travelling in the mission steam yacht *John Williams*, they visited the stations of each district, and met with the missionaries at their Annual Conference and there went to the heart of matters. Great changes were effected in every department of the mission. The visitors were impressed with the results, both spiritual and educational. They reported that these were higher at Kwato than anywhere else in the country. But the system of the settlement of children in a new environment, as carried on at Kwato, came under criticism, since the form of training removed the young people artificially from normal native life, to which they should return to raise the standard of the villages. This system was nevertheless described as a "hot-house" method of education, which they thought should be discontinued. Abel combatted these views by pointing out that the influence of Kwato was already permeating native life through the Christian village communities. As for disbanding the children, that was comparable, he claimed, to Dr. Barnardo sending back his half-educated slum children to the degrading conditions from which he had rescued them. Underlying these discussions, and colouring the opinions of the Deputation, was the fact that they were under compulsion to reduce expenses in every direction possible. Great changes were made. All that could be retained on reduced warrants was preserved, but much that was progressive had to be discarded, including the entire system developed at Kwato.

These days in Committee were a hard testing for Abel. He felt that his adjudicators had failed to appreciate the critical



A NATIVE-BUILT CHAPEL AT SARIBA.

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situation that his work was planned to combat. "After twenty-seven years of careful planning to meet the needs of the district," he wrote, "I cannot be expected to look back at the suggestion of men who do not understand the situation. Nothing would induce us to tear up foundations which have been laid during all these years of prayer and thought." He realized that he had come to a parting of the ways. His vision for the work remained and, in the face of the downward trend of native life which he saw around him, his convictions were unshaken. "With regard to the sale of the plantations, and the disposal of the station children, my own future appears to be wrapped up in what is being surrendered," he wrote, as he handed in his resignation to the Society at the end of the sessions.

I am in no shadow of doubt but that God has called me to do a very definite work for Him in Papua. . . . I regret more than I can say that your decision leaves me no choice. . . . The Kingdom of God must stand before every consideration, and I confidently assert that the step I am taking is in the highest interests of that Kingdom.

In July, 1917, Abel sailed from Papua, once more to fight his battles in England for the continuance of his work. Local sympathizers wished him well on his departure. "Kwato has been an inspiration to us in Papua," wrote the Rev. M. K. Gilmour, of the Methodist Mission. "I trust that as a result of your visit to England you will secure an extension of your work and a liberal recognition of industrial missions as absolutely necessary to people like the Papuans." Dr. Harse, stationed at Samarai at that time, also expressed his opinion:

Working here as Medical Officer under the most favourable opportunities for observing the results of your work, I am convinced that it is the best system for rescuing the Papuan from decay and ultimate extinction. By this I mean the system whereby you keep your people employed and attached to the mission after their primary education is completed, developing



their capabilities instead of drifting back to ordinary village life. I sincerely hope nothing will be done to abolish your system, but rather to extend it. I feel confident that in this lies the best chance of keeping the Papuan race from being submerged and extinguished as European civilization is more extensively introduced into their country. I asked my coxswain during the recent Red Cross sports why they always allowed the Kwato boys to win. His reply was to recount the various moral virtues of the Kwato boys—"Taubada, that is why Kwato win every time." This appeared to me a very strong testimony, especially as it comes from one of the biggest and strongest boys in Samarai.

Departure had been delayed by illness, and Abel was not physically fit to cope with the task. At last he sailed, passing out of the Kwato straits one afternoon in a howling gale and taking with him an anxiety for his wife's failing health. He was leaving behind great burdens, which he knew would devolve upon her at a time when she most needed to be spared. "I have never been called upon to do anything so much in conflict with my natural will," he wrote, but found much comfort from a passage in the fourth chapter of Romans.

What a lesson there is for me there (he wrote to his wife). How it quietens all my fears. Sometimes I think of you with the enormous burdens you have to carry, and my heart begins to fail. Abraham "*staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief*," he was "*mighty in faith*, and was absolutely certain that God was able to make good His promise. I try, in like spirit, to entrust you all to Him, believing that He will support you in everything and give you strength for the day as it is needed. . . . I've left you in His hands. I feel strong. My great possessions are in Safe Deposit! *He is able.*

Viewing his life and work from a perspective on board the ship that took him to Australia, the special needs of his people seemed to stand out more clearly than ever, as did his own convictions.

I know what He wants me to do. What an unspeakably

glorious thing it is to have the chance of doing God's will. I'll have no compromise. The call to God's work is clear and imperative. I think I shall be asked to undertake a much bigger work for the Papuan, and that everything we have done in the past will be conserved.

The journey to England, by way of America, was a chapter of incidents, outstanding of which was the worst storm at sea of Abel's experience. From Auckland to Fiji the steamer *Makura* battled against mountainous seas, with hope diminished and the end expected momentarily. On the second day she was struck by a fifty-foot tidal wave which crashed on her decks, smashing in hatches, carrying away part of the bridge with the entire wireless equipment, and flooding the ship. Shuddering under the impact she heeled over on her beam ends so that the scuppers of her promenade deck were under water; thus she remained for two days. There was considerable panic on board and it fell to Abel's lot to try and soothe his fellow passengers. Many of them had to clear out of their cabins, wading knee-deep in the corridors with their belongings. But Abel felt so certain that there was important work for him to do in England that he was confident all would be well. Listing heavily, with her bridge in ruins, the battered ship at last steamed slowly into the port of Suva. Abel often amused his friends with the picture that he gave of himself in the baggage-room, assisting an actress to rescue her wardrobe from boxes, waterlogged or afloat; pulling out garments once dainty and lacy from the sodden ruins, while the lady wrung her hands and wept copiously at the damage revealed.

The journey from Vancouver to New York gave Abel his first experience of America. Several days were spent in New York, but, at that time, he knew no one in the city that was eventually to become to him a city of friends. Since the World War was in progress there was no definite sailing of steamers for Europe. An envoy of ships lay in the Hudson, waiting for word to go. The submarine campaign was at its height. Abel wearied of the delay in New York, "a vast, and seemingly godless city," he described it; "dazzling at nights with enormous

blazing advertisements." He spent much time praying over his affairs and facing the prospect, if it were God's will, of apparent failure. In that case he must be prepared to begin his work over again. He wrote:

I ask for grace to come back as it were, empty-handed, if that is necessary. . . . God may want to see of what material our faith is made, and this may be His method of finding out. . . . Yes, I am prepared to start again. It might be a better foundation. If He says it is, it must be. It would be as with Abraham, I feel sure, when Lot chose the plain and left him the waste land. We must hear God speak to us and say, "Lift up your eyes. . . . I am with you. God's plan has so often been creation—something out of nothing. Then it is His.

Praying over his personal problems, and especially the matter of his wife's health, he gained such release from anxiety, and such assurance that his prayers were heard, that he walked the streets of New York scarcely able to contain himself for joy. He wrote to his wife on the eve of sailing for England:

What certainty the Word does give us that the Lord is our *Keeper*, our *Defence*, our *Shield*, our *Refuge*, our *Present Help*. I am anxious to make the parting with all but my very soul, a means of grace to me. I want to come back a riper saint, a more spirit-filled man. . . . I'm so glad to be going on. I shall feel I have turned the corner soon. I could face anything and dare anything to get back to you all. This is like walking round the world on my knees to win my prize. I've often told you I would do that. Here goes. Yes, it must be *on my knees*. That is a safe place, where promises are sealed, and where the blessed consciousness is given in the darkest hour that all is well.

Fifteen ships were sunk the week that Abel crossed the Atlantic in the *Adriatic*. Passengers were compelled to wear lifebelts. Most people slept on deck, and there was an air of considerable tension on board. Abel believed that no more was necessary, in view of the ever-present danger, than the

ordinary trust that every Christian should put in God at all times. "God is everywhere," he wrote home to Kwato; "danger is everywhere, and we have to trust Him as implicitly in our peaceful beds as we must in the midst of submarines. And in this spirit I leave you in His safe keeping, as you also entrust me to Him."

A growing roar of anti-aircraft guns met the boat train from Liverpool as it arrived in London at midnight in the middle of an air raid. Euston station was in total darkness. There were no porters to be found, so that groping passengers collected their own baggage. Abel was lucky enough to find an old-time horse-cab and, offering the cabby double fare, succeeded in persuading him to take him to a hotel. The sky to the southeast was criss-crossed with sweeping searchlights. Abel realized, perhaps more forcibly than hitherto, the grim fact that war raged. He had arrived at the beginning of a week of raids.

I was leaving Victoria by train (he wrote on the following night). Suddenly all lights out and a banging of guns all round London. The heavens are at this moment lit up with a hundred searchlights. The roar and boom of our guns is incessant and, of course, shrapnel rains down upon the place like hail. There were two hundred casualties the night before last. I went yesterday to see the smash-up. It was terrible; the big building in a heap, and the poor people who took shelter there buried in ruins.

This was the deranged world to which he had come to promote the interests of a far-off island in the southern Pacific! The whole nation was harnessed for war. Large houses were converted into hospitals for the wounded that poured into London in trainloads. Army huts occupied the well-known parks and open spaces. Women in uniform, smocks, and breeches, drove vans and carts or worked on railways, filling the gaps left by the men. The shortage of food was acute. Queues of people, with their meat and grocery coupons, waited to be served with strictly rationed quantities. "Eat less bread!" enjoined great placards in every provision shop; and what bread there

was tasted "as if sawdust and chalk were the ingredients." Every common was lined out in the cabbages and potatoes of "allowments," and even the railway embankments yielded their vegetable marrows. Papua was truly a far cry. Abel wrote to his wife, who was then in Australia:

Dark streets, very few, and very overcrowded trains; all the ordinary conveniences curtailed; shortage of food; soldiers everywhere, men on leave, men returning to the front, the streets brown with khaki; cripples everywhere. Oh! It is awful. The losses are terrible. So many desolate homes and sad hearts. Try to imagine it, that in your sweet home where your windows never shake as they so often do here with the booming of cannon, you may thank the Lord you are so far away from the storm centre.

Abel went to work at once, systematically visiting members of the Mission Board, laying his plans before them, and soliciting their support. He set out to win his opponents. While he prayed a great deal over each of these visits, he was confident of the strength of his own position, and tackled this job in quite a hunting spirit, not without a degree of relish. Abel had a charm in winning friends, and these triumphs testify to his magnetic personality, his interesting conversation and withal his humility. Captain Barton, an ex-Papuan Governor, when he heard the facts of the case and weighed the whole matter, expressed himself full of hope that far-reaching things would be accomplished for Papua "in spite of Abel's modesty and restraint."

"Every moment of my time is full," he wrote, in the midst of his work. "Such interviews! God is in everything. Such marvellous overrulings. I stick to my guns. I anticipate complete success." In seeking permission to continue his work independently along the lines he had begun, Abel received a wide backing from his friends. Former Governors of Papua came to his aid and lent their support to his scheme. Sir William MacGregor wrote from his retirement in Scotland:

I appreciate your efforts on behalf of the Papuan. If there

is any doubt on the part of your Directors I am ready to come to London, and go with you and see them, and tell them *a gratto oceti* what I think and know of the matter. . . . To conduct such a work as yours a man that is enthusiastic, that is endowed with capacity, that has been tried and has been found to keep it up without faltering, is absolutely indispensable. Thou art the man. With all my heart I wish you health and the means for this work.

In spite of the hopelessness of his efforts, Abel was fighting hard for peace of heart and for ease from his fears concerning his wife's health. News which reached him did not lighten the burden, and news which did not reach him filled him with an uncertainty and foreboding, which was worse. He spent the Christmas season with his mother in Somerset, in a little hamlet which he described: "Just at the foot of the Quantocks. You can get away from everybody, and near to God in a few steps. He made great efforts to preserve a cheerful air in keeping with the season, but when a long-awaited cable failed to reach him, this was not easy. The thought that his wife must be ill hung on him like a weight he could scarcely shake off. It was a time of much prayer and self-examination. He wrote despondingly and, as usual, unsparingly of himself.

I am a moody saint. I wish I were a Moody (and Sankey!) saint. I've been thinking over the parable of the Vine. *Abide*. That is where I fail. I can get up very high sometimes in my communion, but the secret of staying is not yet mine. I go to the "heavenlies" just as a city clerk goes to the seaside. It is real rest and refreshment and joy, but I'm soon back in the grimy town street again, at work in the stuffy office. And yet the parable makes the fruit-bearing look so simple. There is so little for the branch to do but remain always in the Vine. *He does*.

The trial of his faith lasted through Christmas. He would write letters home and, finding them too sad, would destroy them; chiding himself for disloyalty to his Master. He tramped the hills and prayed. At length he found peace, as he wrote:



I poured out my heart to God among the glorious hills. I took the road right over the Quantocks, more of a track than a road, and every yard was an inspiration. Oh, I had an uplifting time in prayer. It is a glorious day and I had a glorious time. I steeped all loved ones in prayer, and all my affairs, and my own poor soul, and I am refreshed. Those swelling, heather-clad hills! Such wealth of beauty in the landscape, with occasional peeps of Exmoor and sea. "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help." . . . The Lord is my Keeper, He keeps not only mine but me. I was assured of this among those silent hills.

At last a cable arrived from his wife, assuring him of her improved health. He could not contain himself for joy and made straight for the beloved hills to express his thankfulness alone to God.

When Abel attended a meeting of a special committee of the L. M. S. that was to deal with the question of the future of Kwato, he was possessed by a strange sense of calm. He was trusting in God, and was prepared to accept what He gave, however contrary that might appear to his own hopes. Almost dispassionately, but with conviction, he mustered the salient facts that were woven into the history of Kwato and the building up of his special work. The main fact that became impressed upon the committee in the course of his speech was that he was not prepared to accept any limitation to the scope and extent of the Kwato plans. The alternatives were, either to let him work out his schemes independently, apart from Kwato, which the Directors agreed was unthinkable, or else to recognize the unusual conditions of his work and to lease Kwato to him and to his friends, retaining him as an honorary missionary of the Society. The latter proposal finally was unanimously approved. "From Mr. Abel's previous history," stated the report of the committee, "there can be no doubt that, in his hands, the religious work of the district will never be allowed to take second place."

Briefly Abel jotted the day's event in his diary: "I spoke at 3



o'clock and then retired, and the Kwato Association scheme went through almost without amendment."

The work, inspired by vision, and built up through a lifetime of prayer and struggle, was to live! That was the cause of rejoicing at Kwato when the brief and anxiously-awaited verdict reached them by cable. The matter had still to come before the Board of Directors of the L. M. S. A vigorous speech for Christian enterprise carried the day, and once more there was unanimous agreement. Abel was not present, but arrived on the scene in time for the congratulations and good wishes of all. The Kwato Association was a fact. "I feel tonight that God has taken things thus far, and will see them through to the end," he wrote. "Let us prepare our own hearts for the fuller opportunities He will give us."

The properties in the Kwato district were leased to the new Kwato Extension Association for a period of ten years. Abel formed his own directorate. With the provision of a stated fund, which the mission stipulated as a safeguard for the immediate future of the new Association, the agreement was to be ratified, and Abel was given *carte blanche* to go ahead. Upon the verdict of the coming ten years was to depend the ultimate permanence of the work.

Three ex-Governors of Papua agreed to serve on the new directorate, of which Sir William MacGregor was the first President. Sir George Le Hunte, who had succeeded him in Papua, was equally in sympathy with the aims of the new mission, of which he wrote:

Your plans are excellent, and will come at a most critical moment in the life of a people for whom our race sought to consider themselves as trustees. If you are a tenth as successful in your new efforts for them as you have been in a more restricted way at Kwato, it will be the saving of them. I feel proud to see my name associated with the new venture.

Captain Barton, who had also been an eye-witness of the work at Kwato, wrote: "So much is at stake, I cannot help feeling enthusiastic. I thought the Papuans were done for, but

you have rekindled my hope." It now remained for the fund to be found that was to give the new Association its start and bring out its final release from the parent Society.

England was under the cloud of war, which affected everything. It did not seem to be the best time to be putting the need of his own work before the Christian public. Urgent and pressing claims were filling people's minds. There was an approaching enemy. Carnage at the very doors distorted people's thoughts. The vibration of the big guns and high explosives in Flanders rattled the window-panes in the south of England, and regularly the maroons shrieked their warning of Zeppelin raids. Missionary enterprise in Papua was a remote call.

Abel had always been a strong pacifist, whose interpretation of the principles of Christ would admit no middle ground. These sentiments were not popular in the midst of the flourish of war-time patriotism, as is seen from the following extract from a letter: "X—— is very militant. We've had one or two battles. But it is a mistake to argue. I shall not convince him, and he certainly won't me. He thinks Christ favoured war, and would himself fight, and so on. He thinks, he says, it must be very easy to take such a position as mine. I tell him to try it. That is about as far as we get."

However, with the daily pageant of horror ever present in a world gone mad, Abel could not but sympathize with those whose very lives were being sacrificed; nor could he fail to become affected by the great sum total of anguish that was shared in every home. He admitted: "I see now, what I did not see before, that there is another side to the question, and if the Germans came much nearer our doors I should be half tempted to pick up a gun, or an axe, or a pot of boiling tar and pitch it! Although this is no argument, and I don't adduce it as such." The jingoism that was prevalent, and even invaded the pulpits, oppressed him. He once retired to the vestibule of a church and wrote important letters on his knee, because the sermon irked him by its extreme "glossing over of British failings, and a condemnation of everything German."

Abel travelled about the country making his work known, and advocating the means whereby a new and better condition of life was to be built up to replace the old barbarism in Papua. "Workmen that need not to be ashamed," "Working with our own hands," he quoted, as he pointed out the spiritual significance of what some of his hearers thought very mundane, and varnished by the title "Missions." He pointed out the results of his twenty-seven years of service to his Papuan fellow workers who were setting up a new standard in their country, honouring God by industrious, self-supporting lives, and exerting a wide influence over their people while they preached the Gospel. He spoke of the incompatibility of Christianity with an aimless, lazy life. He looked ahead to the goal of an independent and self-propagating Papuan Church, only to be reached by the training of Papuan leadership, mentally equipped, reliable, and able to carry on his work. This was an aim that was nearer fulfilment than Abel could have realized at that time.

"As the days pass I seem to get no nearer the object of my work," he wrote after some busy months. "I keep reminding myself that this is not my business. I look up, and comfort myself with the thought that if this is of God He will, in His own time and way, bring it to pass; and if it is not, I want none of it."

The necessity of securing the fund stood in the way of his return to Papua, but in spite of the fact that he pined for the reunion with his family, he was not worrying. The way his steps had been ordered, and the climax in the Board Room of the L. M. S. was too recent for that. "We believe it is the guidance of God," Mr. Frank Lenwood had written, with that experience fresh in his mind. "I do not worry now," Abel wrote. "I have finally done with that, I trust. I merely 'wait patiently for the Lord.' I feel confident He will give me the desire of my heart." The delay in his plans naturally drove him to prayer and self-examination. As he shared the problems of his work with his children from their earliest, he writes thus to a son at school in Australia:

I have to examine my heart to see whether I am standing in my own way; to see whether I myself am the cause of my detention; whether I am turning the key of my own prison upon myself. Am I prepared, as God would have me prepared, to enter upon this great work for Him? Is He holding me back because He fears if I am allowed to go ahead as I am I may wreck His work, and not do it in His way? Yes, I am looking in, and looking up. . . . This work, which I always think of as yours as well as ours, is full of dangers, unless it is built upon the solid rock. I could do quite a lot to look at, quite on my own. Imposing buildings, and education, and so forth, but it might be quite useless. The only hope for such a work is that, brick by brick, it should be laid in faith, and prayer, and by holy hands.

The months were passing. Abel asked God to "open the windows of heaven," as only this would release him to return to his work. The following morning he began to see the answer to this prayer, and from that time gifts continued to come in. He described himself setting forth that morning, "much buoyed up by promises which are only ours as we appropriate them by faith." The turn of the tide began with a chance meeting with Sir Evan James, who asked about the fund and said, "Well, Abel, I'm going to give you £500!"

"So the Lord is making it rain from heaven," wrote Abel. "What a change! How easily things are done if He does them! This must teach me a lesson never to be forgotten. I long to get away and pray, lest I fall back, and to thank God for His goodness and mercy." Abel wrote the foregoing on the 9th of April, 1918. On the 22nd of the same month he was able to send the following cable to his wife: "*Doing splendidly; fund raised; not long now. Praise.*"

At last Abel set sail for home. When the afternoon tea-gong sounded on the ship that steamed down the Mersey to a circuitous Atlantic crossing, passengers were amazed to find themselves provided with plain white bread and real butter. Abel used to describe how plates of this rare luxury were demolished in preference to anything else, after the scant, impoverished

substance that had taken the place of bread in England. On the eve of the arrival in New York the ship was suddenly plunged into darkness, just as the passengers were about to take their seats at dinner. Their ship doubled back upon her course at full speed, and when they arrived some forty-eight hours late at their destination, they learned that a record week of submarine damage had just been completed.

The reunion with his family, for which Abel had yearned, took place in Sydney. Busy months of incessant travelling in a country on the verge of starvation, and nearer to calamity than most realized, had left him looking thin and older than he ever looked again. It had been decided to make the new start at Kwato early the following year. After a few fleeting days in Sydney Abel set out for Papua, to spend three months meeting the people at various centres, preparing them for the new start and reorganizing the work. He wrote of the entrance into the China Straits at midnight:

It was a beautiful calm night with the moon just about an hour from dipping below the horizon. The villages at the end of Logea lit some brilliant fires and, as we rounded the Kwato point, the hill lights began to burst out until the island seemed ablaze. I went to bed after we had anchored, but only to rest. It seemed such a great day in my life: the re-start of God's work. As I thought of the children coming on I could not sleep, but who would want to sleep in preference to thinking over these things?

The following day saw him at Kwato, with a huge crowd overjoyed to welcome him, including the old family dog, nearly mad with excitement. There were great public meetings as well as private talks, as everyone was eager to hear the news. With Abel the concerns of the mission were for all to share. He found great encouragement in the spirit and devotion among the school children who had been Miss Parkin's special care in his absence. "The children cried for joy when I told them of our dear One's improved health," he wrote. "There is going to be a great effort to have everything in good order for her return.

I told them that the preparation she will appreciate best is that from within."

Naturally, after a long absence there was much to put right. It involved three months of endless interviews. "So much to delve into and to uncover, and to correct and to straighten out, here, there, and everywhere. Oh, but beyond all disappointments and failures there is the joy of victories." As Abel took stock of the whole situation he was overjoyed with the promise he found as he faced a new lease of service.



A BOY IN HIS DUGOUT



### XIII

#### REMAKING THE PAPUAN

WITH the vision before him that the founders of the New Papua must be earnest Christian pioneers, Charles Abel entered upon the new period in his life at Kwato and took up the work with fresh vigour.

Any ignorant boat-boy could, with a little oversight, clear and plant an area of ten acres; any plantation hand could do the same, but is this all we are aiming at? (he wrote). It means, and my people recognize it, something much more than this to begin what we may call a new national life for the Papuan with any hope of success. Kwato for many years has stood for this hope. Our young men have positively refused higher wages, and extra advantages such as holding plantations in their own right, because they regard themselves as missionaries in this new crusade. It has been the goal at which we have aimed for many years.

To the rare joy of being back on the field was added the welcome of his people, their love and gratitude and, above all, their participation in the responsibility of the work, a thing that he had long hoped for and was deeply gratified to see. Returning from his first tour round the district, he wrote:

What an experience it has been! I couldn't sleep last night and spent some time reviewing the last few days with great thankfulness and praying for individuals and stations. There is much to give us all great cause to thank God for the evidence of His hand upon His work here. Things look so very promising in every direction. My visit has bucked me up. I praise God for so many evidences of growth, and ripeness for the new opportunity. Everybody is working with a will. The one thing necessary is that we should ourselves be prepared by the Holy Spirit to avail ourselves of a great opportunity.

The loyalty of his own station children inspired him. "Everybody seems glad to see me back," he wrote. "What a pleasure it is to work for Christ among such people. They are happier in nothing more than in doing something to help us. I have never enjoyed work in Papua as I have with these delightful young people. It makes the future look most hopeful. They are a fine band and all anxious to grow in the things of God."

Abel was as enthusiastic about the rising generation at Kwato as ever he had been with earlier boys and girls, now grown. Many of them were carrying on the work in other centres that had begun with themselves. Their successors were proving to be as keen sportsmen as their elders had been. This, in Abel's estimation, augured well for the future. He prayed over each in turn, as he had prayed for their predecessors, and anxiously watched their development. The ubiquitous notebook, that he always carried, contained the brief summary of the day's doings, a medley of sermon notes, thoughts on the morning's devotions, passages of *Suan* translations of Scripture, estimates and accounts, building plans, newspaper clippings of various cricket scores, copra tallies, and timber calculations. Here he also jotted down notes on the future leaders of his work, thus: "Bele, a clever youth and fine medium bowler. Maru, nice serious lad—very clever behind the sticks. Maipua, a good character. He will be the best medium-break bowler we shall have for some years to come."

Abel put a value upon the place of cricket in the education of the Papuan that perhaps few could understand, and he lived to see his earlier visions justified. Other missions have followed this lead and village groups have taken up the sport, often with the help and coaching of interested Government officers. Inter-racial contests between eastern Papuans (Masims) and the central (Papuo-Melanesians), and northeast coastal tribes, are a recent development that are playing their part in uniting people who, until recently, regarded all who lived outside the limits of their own ancestral lands as strangers and enemies. The old exclusiveness finds no place in sport, and

the rising generation imbibes, as a matter of course, the principles of good sportsmanship patiently instilled into their elders by precept and persistent practice. Cricket has also done good service in breaking down similar barriers and a sense of undue superiority among certain sections of the white race that has adopted this country.

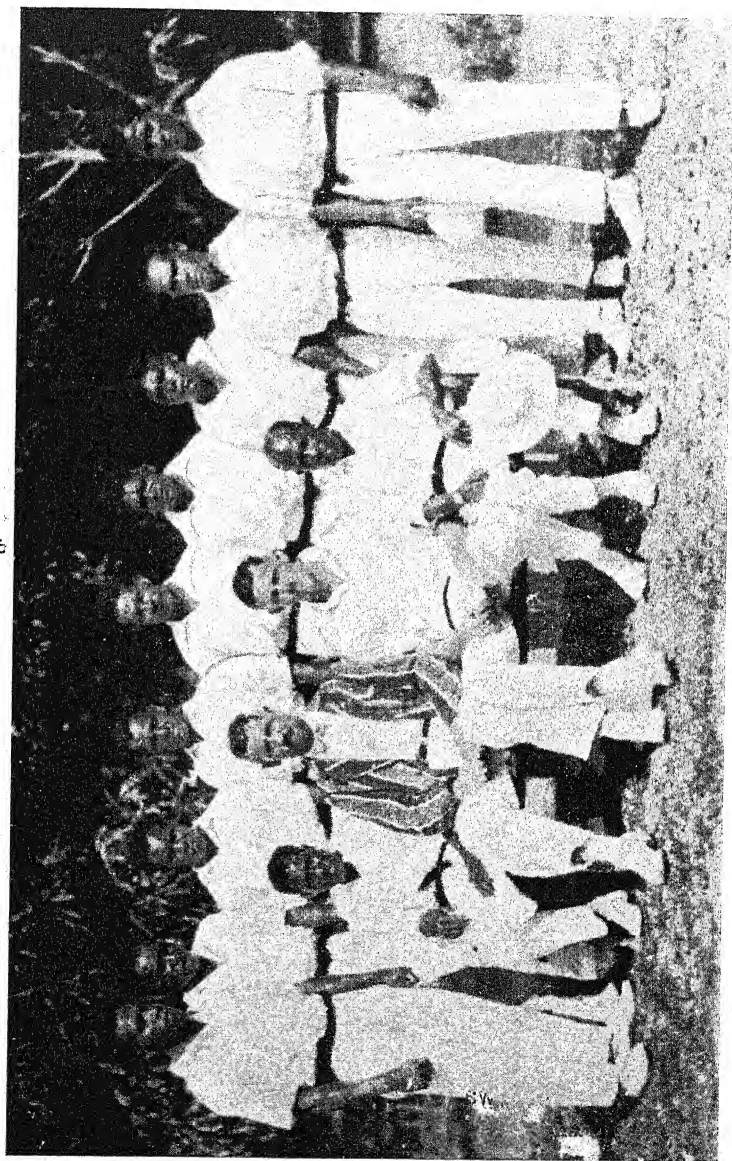
Abel never realized his ambition to take a Papuan team down to Australia, though this project was often much to the fore and was postponed from year to year only through pressure of work. A high standard of cricket was maintained, and Kwato has been fortunate in having to compete often with good white teams both at Samarai and at Port Moresby. One of the high spots in the history of cricket at Kwato was the occasion when the mission boys were given an opportunity to play against a team that included Frank Laver, the Australian international who was visiting Samarai. The giant, whose play the boys were told to absorb, was bowled first ball by Alaedi, the Kwato googly bowler. A similar experience followed when Gatehouse, the Tasmanian wicket-keeper, sent up an easy catch at Kwato, after scoring only seven runs.

Discipline was always an essential part of the Kwato training. "So far from 'thinking black,' I haven't even begun to think grey-brown," Abel once wrote. Although he was most ready to admit his inability always to account for native behaviour, he nevertheless knew the Papuan, even if certain aspects of his character remained a puzzle to the end. Discipline, he believed, was something that met a Papuan need. He was a disciplinarian, though he was never a martinet, and always preserved a most human relationship with the young people in training. The order of life on all the stations had to go like clock-work: the very antithesis of the slip-shod Papuan way of living. Habits of reliability were patiently and persistently drilled into children in early childhood, and only by this means did Kwato boys and girls earn their reputation for industry, cleanliness, and good manners. This system of intensive cultivation had a wide influence, as all Christians in the district looked upon what they termed "Kwato ways" as the standard

for *ekalesia* behaviour. They strove to emulate the example set at Kwato, and to bring order into the community life of the Christian village groups. Each out-station became a miniature Kwato, and in time the same could be said to a lesser degree of the Christian villages.

One example of Kwato's influence over the whole district is in evidence with regard to the introduction of foreign dress. Abel discouraged the indiscriminate adoption of *dimdim* clothes, but as time went on clothes began inevitably to be worn in the vicinity of the white settlement, and without any regard to their suitability. On Sundays the people would abandon their picturesque and suitable native clothing to come to worship in odds and ends of *dimdim* rags. Venerable old men would walk sedately into church clad only in a discarded waistcoat and a native leaf band. Women would appear in portions of cast-off underclothing, supplemented by their inadequate grass skirts. Traders imported flamboyant colours, of such combinations as yellow, magenta and bright red, because these would appeal to the Papuan's fancy. At Kwato a standard of dress was set, of simple tunic design for women, well-cut, and economical. Colours were chosen with care and with regard for their contrast to brown Papuan skins. The ungainly "mother-hubbard," frilly and voluminous, such as is worn all over the Pacific, was not tolerated, neither was the wearing of dirty and ragged garments. *Ekalesia* women were quick to perceive the kind of clothing that was not "Kwato" style. Traders in the district began to find that they had to exercise care in the cloth they imported. A local trading firm felt it advisable to submit patterns to the Mission before ordering large consignments. The Government of Papua, for hygienic reasons, had discouraged the wearing of clothes except in the vicinity of towns, and European dress is still, for the most part, worn only on state occasions.

An important development, which marked the beginning of the new era at Kwato, was the establishment of a printing press. An expert came from Australia to teach printing, expecting to remain a year. After he had been at Kwato four



CHARLES ABEL AND HIS PAPUAN CRICKET TEAM.

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months, he announced that he was going home, since the printing staff of Papuan youths had already mastered their craft completely. The press has been in constant use since that day. Papuan Scriptures have been printed in many languages, and the press has also produced a large number of local publications, both religious and educational. The British and Foreign Bible Society accept the publication of Scriptures for which they bear the cost, and permit their imprint on all books printed for them at Kwato. Once more the Papuan proved himself in his more than usual capacity. "So few white men can be found who will credit a native with real ability," Abel wrote. "They seem to think it lets them down if the Papuan is able to do something better than they."

Later a new sawmill was successfully erected by Papuans, guided solely by blueprints and entirely unsupervised. Abel wrote:

Their ability to see through and erect machinery with what knowledge they had picked up, and without definite instruction in engineering, must strike any one who can appreciate what this work involved, in accurate levelling and truing and lining up, to say nothing of the assembling of those hundred parts, as proving remarkable capacity for mechanics in the Papuan.

Our thought is to cultivate his capacities so that he can honour God in his life, as well as to find him new interests to replace those he has lost.

Some of the most useful members of the Kwato community were the blacksmiths. This department was in the charge of Anderea, a Papuan who had had nine months' instruction in Sydney in his youth and who taught his craft to others.

His skill (wrote Abel) proves to what good purpose he spent his time at the Technical College. Since then Sydney Trades Unions have decided that none but white pupils are to be allowed the advantage of this institution. We fly the Australian Union Jack in Papua, but whereas any Australian is allowed to come and seek his fortune here, no Papuan can receive the benefit of instruction in the Technical College in Sydney!



Expert work, capably done by Papuans, was what Abel rejoiced to see, in the printing office, as in the boat-building shed, and in the carpentry and blacksmith's shops.

The clashing of hammers, and the scrunching of saws, the general hubbub of work everywhere draws attention to an industrious, happy and progressive people; clever hands doing skilled work, developing brains, and conceiving new methods; men and women working with interest, not selfishly, but with the great incentive of saving their own race.

The work at Kwato was as exacting as ever in its claims on time and strength. Added to the care of the crowd of station children that was growing up, there was the superintendence of the growing industrial work centred here. Miss Parkin for some years now had made her headquarters at Koeabule, the chief out-station where there was a school and a large plantation; Abel and his wife tried to do the work of ten at Kwato. There was the large correspondence that the running of the Mission entailed and, on top of all, the unending responsibility of bookkeeping. Abel was scrupulous in accounting for all money that passed through his hands. "My bookkeeping has not always been scientific, but it has always been faithful," he wrote. Often at the end of a busy day he and Mrs. Abel would turn to, after night had brought peace and silence to the hilltop, and work until the small hours to keep up with their accounts.

Abel's capacity for work was phenomenal. He always brought a zest to his task, and gave the impression of throwing himself into his work in the spirit of glorious enterprise. Through careful organization, responsibilities at Kwato were divided, and shared by the Papuan helpers, so that regularly Abel could turn his attention to the needs of the district: the villages, plantations, and Mission out-stations.

One of the greatest encouragements at this period was the fact that the Mission was manifestly affecting the lives of the people in many ways. Even the heathen, who clung tenaciously to their old outlook, began to show appreciation of what the

Mission was doing for them. One day an old, shock-headed Papuan, who made no pretence that he held any brief for the new "way," brought Abel a pound, saying: "Taubada, it is true I do not follow your Way, but you nevertheless work for our children. May I not also bring a gift for your work, as the *ekalesia* do?" It is a rule in the Mission that gifts are only accepted from Christians. No collections are taken at any meetings. The people only give when they feel moved to do so, and they give liberally.

The out-stations were becoming real centres of native life. People travelling from other parts of the country would call or put up for the night, and opportunities for helping them abounded. "It is very interesting," Abel wrote, "that these strangers, who have no claims whatever on us, make the Mission beach their camping-ground. 'The sparrow hath found her a house, and the swallow a nest for herself.'"

But Abel was first and foremost an evangelist, and his most important work was that of building up the Papuan church, and meeting its spiritual needs with systematic and effective Bible teaching. He was always singularly free from stereotyped methods. In the evangelistic work, as in other branches, he adapted his work to the peculiar circumstances of the people. He early discovered how comparatively small was the result of public exhortation in general meetings, compared with that of personal interviews. Intimate heart to heart dealings with members of his flock, and interviews without number wherever he went, were an important part of his life. "Real hard work," he described it. "Harder than preaching any day, but it is a great opportunity. How much tilling of the ground there is to be done!"

District work presented the usual contrast between the hopelessness of those who were satisfied with their empty lot, and the hopefulness of those who were turning to the Light. There were the hypocritical and self-righteous, as well as the truly penitent. Despair and joy alike were met in turn and at times, in his dealings with the people, Abel would wonder whether sin would ever become hideous in the eyes of the Papuan.

It is a transgression if detected, but being detected is the calamity, not the sin. . . . "They say I am bad, therefore I am bad. No one who reports bad of me saw me do evil, but they say I am bad; be it so." I tried to make him see that it was not a question of reports. God was acquainted with his inmost intentions.

The greatest work for the Papuans was perhaps a work of prayer. The needs of his people led him more and more in this direction. "I think our part for the time being is intercession," reads a note in his journal concerning a certain retrograde in the district. And it continues: "The father did not go to the piggery to see the prodigal. Like the prodigal, K—— has to come to himself. He will have to be thoroughly broken down before he gets back to Christ. Crocodile tears won't do."

Staying at various out-stations in turn, he used to walk up and down the beach at night, a lonely figure, yet far from alone, deep in prayer. Down by the water's edge of the little bay at Wagawaga, where the coconut palms rise up in a tall semi-circle from the sand, the villagers remember seeing him walking alone thus on moonlight nights. They knew it was on their behalf that he was at work in earnest communion with his Master.

Abel began to see much fruit from his work, as evidenced in real conviction, repentance and sincerity. A letter, written while he was on his travels in the district, gives a hint of the missionary's reward.

We meant to get an early start on Monday, but there were a hundred and one things to do when Monday came. M—— was up to her neck in interviews. So it was 10:15 before we got away. Just as I was leaving I received a painful letter from poor Kadawe, which had to be answered. "Your dead child writes to you. Is there any way for the very dead to live again? It is still day. The night will come, and where shall I be then?"

The same letter reveals still more reward in the unexpected

meeting with an ignorant man seeking the Way. This seeker had himself gone on a two-day's journey inland to see a notoriously bad man, whom he only knew by report of his evil deeds, in order to bring Christ into his life.

Doesn't this prove that Iabai knew from personal experience that Christ could cure this incorrigible? When Iabai led his convert to me on the beach and openly told me of the evil heart having been tamed by the grace of the Lord Jesus, it reminded me of the story of the Gadarene demoniac. The man stood before me and, as Iabai recited his evil deeds and the uncontrollable fury of his temper, he raised his eyebrows now and then by way of acquiescence. This he did, too, when Iabai went on to say that Jesus Christ had come into his life and given him a new heart. I was greatly cheered. It was a picture worth seeing: Iabai standing before the people of his village, with his hand upon the shoulder of his friend whom he had sought and found, and brought to Christ.

The fruits of a life so wholly given to his people began more and more to be evident. He wrote once from an out-station describing an impatient wait for his launch, which failed to arrive. He had been inclined to fret at the delay which had upset all of his arrangements, when a long line of men and women filed into the compound, each one carrying a gift of native food—yams, taro, bunches of bananas, and pawpaws. They were all heathen who had come down from the hills behind the station. Hitherto they had shown no desire to accept the Gospel message, and now they came simply to show their goodwill. They wanted nothing, they were merely grateful. He was their "Taubada," and they knew where to go in time of trouble. That was all. Abel gathered them into the church, which they filled. "A strapping crowd of good-looking people," he described them. "Suppose the *Mamari* had come when we wished! What could I say to them? Thank God, we do not deal in words, but in *the Word*, which is Christ. We can leave the result in confidence. Many of these men and women will have tramped fifteen miles before they get back to their homes.

Knowing what it takes to move the Papuan in the mass, there is something very cheering in this visit." Personal plans had to be altered, but a higher plan having been accomplished, he adds: "Sail Ho, *Mamari*! There she is, three miles away to the east, bounding along with a stiff breeze and a fairly lumpy following sea."

In many places, however, there was still a vast indifference to the light and progress that was to be seen in the country. "Tavara are hanging onto the rags of a corpse," he wrote of one tribe. "There is little of the old life left; nothing exciting like there used to be, but still they trot their poor pigs from village to village, and waste much time and effort in the endless feasting. We can hear them yelling, as they come along the coast, for a long way."

Abel was accused more than once by anthropologists of prohibiting various native customs, such as feasting, dancing and allied cults. So far from this being the case, he did not believe that he, or any Christian, had any right to interfere with the ceremonies of the people. Where Christians were concerned there could be no question of the incompatibility of certain customs with their new-found faith. There were many things that pre-supposed a fear of spirits, or an allegiance to malignant sorcery, which converts regarded as belonging to the old darkness, and therefore left behind. But the observance of mortuary rites and doubtful practices Abel left entirely with the Christian people, reminding them that they must decide in any ceremony whether such would be to the glory of God, whether it would strengthen the church, whether it would help the heathen to a knowledge of Christ, and whether in days to come their children would bless God for their decision. More than once the Christians, entirely without outside instigation, called a meeting among themselves to thrash out these problems. Abel trusted their verdict. They knew best the full significance and implication of their own rites. They knew also what it meant to follow Christ. In every case, after long prayer and debate, they advocated a clean break with old heathen ways. Their stand was entirely the result of their own

decision and always the church was strengthened for its uncompromising attitude towards the world around it.

The *ekalesia* were warned, however, that it was not their place to dictate in the customs of the heathen. On one occasion the Christians at a certain place complained that there was much immorality owing to the organization of dances by two South Sea Islanders who were working on a plantation. What were they to do? Could they not stop the heathen revelry?

I told them (Abel wrote) to remind the Christian people that the two foreigners who were instigating the dances were no friends to the Papuan. "They were only in the country for what they could get out of it; that the world sought its own pleasures, and these were often the pleasures of gross sin. The Church was quite distinct from the world and could manifest its distinctness by its attitude towards this immoral dancing."

Occasionally Abel had to reprimand Christians who overstepped the bounds in their misplaced zeal.

Dewega wrote to me yesterday. He has begun, very soon after his talk with me on Sunday, to set things straight in his locality. Someone has built a new house, and is making a feast to celebrate the occasion. The feast includes an item or two with the *boiatu*. Dewega, with his new zeal, rushes in and orders the revellers to stop! That, says he, all belongs to the darkness from which I have just emerged. He writes to say that for three nights he has protested, and they tell him to "go to Jericho." Will I strengthen his hands? . . . I wrote and told him to look after the church members, and not to try to stop the poor heathen from all the joy life had in store for them. It is as though F. B. Meyer went to town of an evening and demanded the immediate closing of a London night club.

All round the district little churches were growing up and were the focus of the Christian life of the adjacent villages. These were conducted entirely by the believers themselves, who built their own churches and elected their own representatives from each hamlet to bear the responsibility. "Landed at Bara-



bara and chose a site for a church," reads a typical diary entry. "We had a short service on the spot, asking the Lord to make it the birthplace of many souls in the days to come." In some places the church was entirely a building "not made with hands," where Abel met his flock in the open air. The places of worship were varied. In a damp country decay and rot are swift. Rickety, patched-up village church buildings, with rat-tan floors that sprung beneath one, were not always more desirable than the open air with its trials.

The public service was a teaser (Abel once wrote). I really dreaded it. We sought in vain for a place where we could hold it out of the wind, and out of the sound of the tearing, pounding surf on the reef. It was not a very happy time for me. Several cocks, in the service of the devil, succeeded in crowing me down every now and then. Horses neighing, cows bellowing, pigs grunting, fish splashing on the beach, birds screeching, and, on top of all—the sun!

The deacons in each village group took their duties seriously. This was the first step towards larger responsibility, both in the evangelistic work and in the organizations that are now almost entirely in Papuan hands. At Logea, the community nearest to Kwato, the Christians organized their own council of members, elected from each village, to look after the order in the villages, and to deal with the matters that affect the common welfare of the people. The council was an exact reproduction of the Kwato council, a body that met at stated intervals, and was responsible for making, altering, and maintaining the laws on Kwato, as well as for administering discipline. Abel was never forgetful of the ultimate goal of independence for his people. More and more they were entering into the work, and were beginning to bear the burden of its themselves. The council at Logea, quite an august body, was a great success. They were recognized by the Government, to whom they were responsible, and who co-operated with them in their first efforts at self-determination. Many public improvements to houses and roads were the outcome of the council's work. With the aid of

the Government a communal plantation was formed, though they needed to be assured that the venture was really theirs and that outside agencies were entirely disinterested. The Logea council was the forerunner of similar councils in other communities that have been of great value in awakening a sense of responsibility and in helping the people to realize that the Government is a power working in their best interests. These elementary first steps in racial self-consciousness were greatly welcomed by those who had the welfare of these people at heart, and who knew the intense individualism and lack of corporate feeling in the Papuan.



CLIMBING FOR COCONUTS

## XIV

### PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

THE first years of the Kwato Extension Association were affected by the post-war upheaval that was felt in out-of-the-way places, even more than the war itself. Abel was in Papua, organizing his work for the new start that was to be made the following year, when the armistice was declared in November, 1918. He was staying at Koeabule, and was preparing to set off early one morning, with the whole school, to clear a small plantation at one of the out-stations. They were planning to make a picnic of the day's work, so that the young people were in high spirits, enjoying the anticipation of the outing. Abel himself was always one for whom there was "no fun like work." Just as an overloaded dinghy, with her gun-whales level with the water, was conveying the last batch of boys and girls from the shore to the launch, a local trader, who was passing in his launch, drew in to shore and shouted: "War over!" The terseness of his important message was due to the fact that it expressed all he or any one knew of the facts that lay behind those two words. The Papuans had all heard of the "big war" that was raging between the *dimdim* countries on the other side of the world. Its only effect on them was that they could get more money for their copra than ever before. This, however, could buy them no rice, and they paid so heavily for what they could procure that the high value of their coconuts did not benefit them much in the end. When the news of the armistice was received the launch, *Mamari*, was ordered decorated with bunting, red calico, and everything else that could be hoisted, and off the party went, with flags flying, conch-shells blowing, and the children cheering loudly every time they passed within earshot of a village. They passed up the coast of Milne Bay, keeping as close to the shore as pos-

sible. Near the mouth of a certain creek they saw a number of men shrimping in a line, standing up to their knees in water, and bending over their hand-nets with their backs to the ocean. Cheers and conch-shell blasts burst forth anew from the *Mamari*. "The big war is ended!" they cried out to the shrimpers. "There is peace!" The startling news evoked no response. They repeated their joyful refrain until, at last, one man waved a hand behind him, without even turning his head. The others were too intent upon their shrimping even to acknowledge an event that had sent the whole world wild with relief.

The war was over, but the years that followed were years of rough passage for the new Mission. "Things have been difficult," Abel wrote in 1919. "The shortage of food, no rice especially, has made it our first concern to find daily bread for our big family." Prices soared until the commodities that they depended upon gave out. Flour, sugar, rice, and kerosene became unprocurable. The industries were closed down and all work was arranged with a view to the possibilities of garden-making, and the proximity of sago swamps for times of emergency. All estimates that Abel had made for the expenditure of the first years of the Kwato Association were useless. They were glad enough to be able to mark time, living as close-hauled to the wind as possible, until times should be normal again. The second year was worse than the first. "A year of unexpected and unrivalled stress and difficulty," reads the report. "At Kwato alone, our educational centre, we have to support 200 souls, with native food almost unprocurable owing to drought, and with imported goods rising to over four times their normal price." On top of all these trying conditions there was a drastic fall in the copra market after the inflated war-time prices. This not only affected some of the industries, but meant also a sudden decline in the liberal gifts of Papuan Christians, who found their one source of earning money seriously curtailed. Copper mines, rubber plantations, and similar commercial ventures in the country were closing down all round them. Abel wrote to his Directors: "To have survived 1920

almost amounts to an achievement. We should be profoundly thankful to God."

In view of the problem of these difficult years the Chairman of the Australian Committee decided to visit Kwato to make a thorough investigation of the work, and to advise about the future plans of the Mission. This visit was to have an important bearing on the coming years. William Williamson was a sterling character, a true, generous-hearted Scotsman, whose judgment was widely respected in Sydney, where he was a prominent citizen. He put aside many claims, civic, mayoral, commercial, educational and religious, to come to Kwato. He began his investigations the day he left Sydney, eagerly seeking every opinion to enable him to view the Papuan situation from all points. For nearly a month he entered into every phase of the life and work. He was overwhelmed by all he saw, especially of the capacity of the Papuan, amply in evidence at Kwato.

Every moment of his time was fully occupied (wrote Abel); he found infinite pleasure in every phase of the work. To him it seemed a glorious enterprise, and more than once he wished one or another of his personal friends could have the inspiration of sharing in it as he was doing. He despaired of being able to tell them about it in such a way as to give them any adequate idea of its absorbing interest. He bantered me with having a very poor gift of advocacy, and said he could only marvel that, from the little I had said of the work, he had ever been induced to come into it.

Williamson wrote to his colleagues on the committee in Sydney: "It is very difficult to describe the influence of Kwato. One has to see it, to live in it, to realize fully its present power as a Christian Mission and its enormous possibilities."

He visited each of the out-stations; he thrashed out every problem and tried as much as possible to share the everyday life in Kwato. He went to great pains to interview the natives themselves, and with all the simplicity of a great soul he suc-

ceeded in gaining the confidence of these reserved people to an extraordinary degree. He worked with the youths in training, and had long talks with them in order to buck them up. "Don't be merely obedient workers," they remember his saying to them; "be a part of the management yourselves. Let us see that you are sharing the responsibility." He discussed the work with Papuan leaders and was touched by the concern they expressed for the welfare of the Mission, quoting in his report the simile used by a Papuan:

He described the depression which came over them when word came that the industrial work was to be abandoned. They felt that they had, as it were, built a cistern to hold water for their children, and now when it was half full someone had locked it up and taken away the key. The whole work is a matter of constant prayer with them.

At one of these conferences an old village Christian voiced their concern for the future of their children, and pointed out with simple wonder how new this feeling was. They had never before cared what befell their children, but now they themselves could see plainly the changes that were coming upon themselves in their awakened outlook and uplook.

Williamson, who was a master builder in Sydney, was impressed with the suitability of Kwato for an educational centre, from a topographical point of view. "His skilled eye found flats and hills so placed that they were almost asking to be utilized for one or another of the many needs of our undertaking," Abel wrote, and together they chose sites for new buildings. Williamson himself supervised the erection of a large carpentry and boat-building shed. He also surveyed a new circuitous road up the hill that eased the steep height with an easy gradient. Volunteers from a local group of villages were called for to work on the road, and there was a willing response. The following day a deputation from a group of villages on another island arrived, saying that they had come to ask why they had no part in making this road. Williamson enjoyed this immensely. He was going to tell his friends, he



declared, that he had discovered a country where volunteer workmen clamoured for their rights!

The fellowship of this congenial guest, whose opinion and judgment were of inspired value, brought a great uplift to Abel. Together they sought to find out by what means each centre in the district might contribute as much as possible to the highest welfare of its locality.

The minds of all had been much centred on the buildings that were in course of construction, so that Williamson's parting words on the Sunday before he sailed came home with force to his hearers. "We have a building not made with hands," was the subject of a message that was full of power, and one that subsequent events were to make a precious and doubly treasured memory for all at Kwato.

Williamson left Kwato determined to come back some day. "Not once, but many times!" he told the boys and girls as he bade them good-bye.

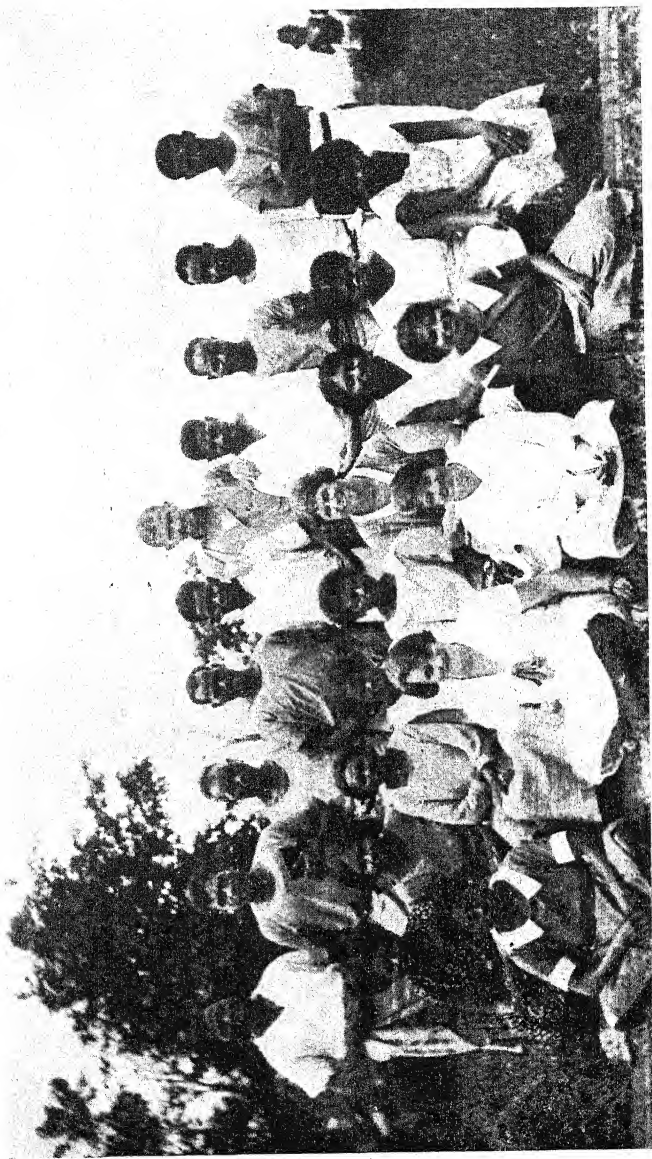
He came to Kwato deeply interested in us (Abel wrote); he went away on fire with zeal for this Christian service, born of personal contact with Papuans, and many interviews with them; of an oft-expressed surprise at their capacity and worth; of a newly-realized estimate of the destructive forces which are threatening them with extinction.

Travelling home, full of encouraging reports of the work and with valuable first-hand opinions to guide the committee in Sydney, their friend never reached his destination. He developed typhoid on the steamer and was carried ashore at a Queensland port, where he died in hospital.

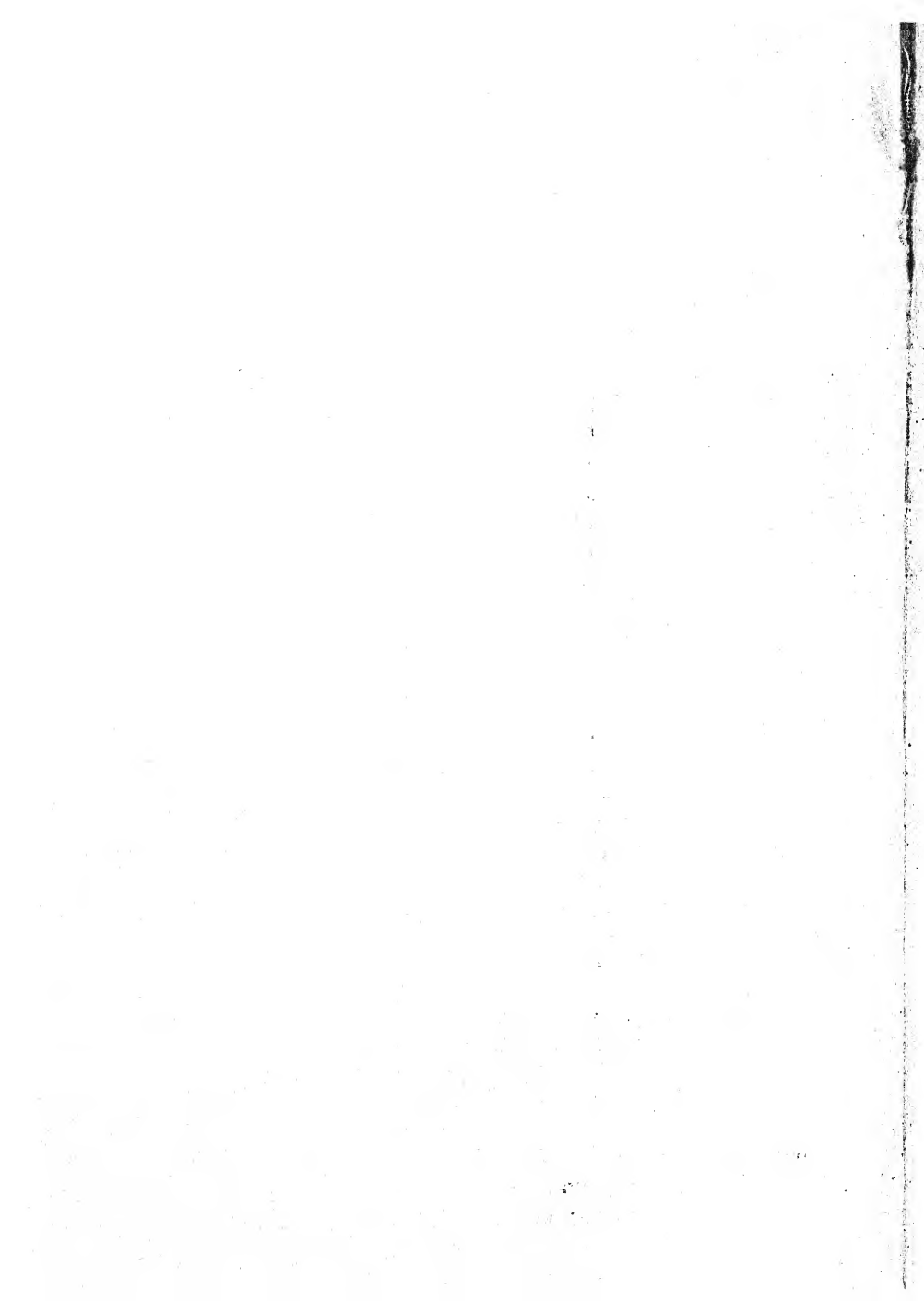
Abel was stunned by the news, brought by radio; indeed, the whole of Kwato was a place of mourning, and Abel wrote to the committee in Sydney:

The rare spirit of our friend pervades every corner of our home, every hill and hollow on our island. Some day we shall hope to materialize his plans, so firmly and broadly laid. His words of Christian counsel, which rang with earnestness and sincerity, will remain in our minds as a lasting and precious





CECIL AND PHYLLIS ABEL, HALLIDAY BEAVIS, MARGARET DRENNAN, AND A GROUP OF PAPUAN EVANGELISTS.



memory, and we shall go on with the work he so evidently enjoyed, under the inspiration of having shared his friendship so intimately on the eve of his call to higher service.

Most pressing at this time was the need for more helpers. At the age of fifty-eight, Abel was working as hard as ever, with his work growing steadily. The trio, including Miss Parkin, who had joined them from Koeabule, went up to Duabo for two or three days of quiet rest. "This is Saturday," Abel wrote from the mountain refuge, "so that our lovely holiday has come to an end. We shall go forth like giants refreshed. Oceans of work await us. I really stand aghast as I contemplate all there is to do. In whichever way I look I see neglected duties; some of them so important that the question arises as to whether I have not been doing things which might better have been postponed." Once more in the thick of the demands of work, he wrote to his eldest daughter in Sydney: "We are terribly in need of helpers. This kind of thing cannot go on as it is. I am scarcely ever more than a few hours at one of the out-stations. We must have help, or the work will suffer."

The need for adequate buildings was another pressing problem. They were well aware of the fact that they had what was far more vital and important, in the spirit of the people and the spiritual results they were seeing. Referring to housing difficulties, Abel wrote:

Let us remember that the Lord's work is in more than buildings; it is in the hearts of our people, and perhaps He sees that we had better do deeper work before we go so far ahead with the material things. There is so much emphasis put upon service, charities, and machinery in the Christian world today that you do fight a bit shy of too much paraphernalia.

The first step towards an increased scope for Abel was the timely arrival of a trained accountant, whom the friends in Sydney had found. "Like marriage, this letting your committee choose your staff, is a lottery," Abel wrote when he heard of the new appointment. However, Victor Lyndon

proved to be the right man, and a godsend during the seven years he spent at Kwato.

At this time Government statistics showed an alarming decrease in the birthrate in this part of Papua, with the exception of *ekalesia* and Mission associates, who were known for their healthy families. Broadly, the causes to which the decline was attributed were the break-up of the native social system; lack of communal life and the co-operation necessary for making large and adequate food gardens; malpractices such as abortion and infanticide, which, though severely penalized by the Government, were not easy to detect; and finally scourge of introduced diseases, the most destructive of which were venereal. "The whole question is: do we, as a Christian body, amount to what is sufficient to rebuild the race?" Abel asked. The problem concerned all who were interested in native welfare, and Abel collected all the data he could to bear on the subject, including the opinions, both of white residents and Papuans, so far as any thoughtful opinions could be found amongst the latter. After a demonstration with pebbles on the sand, he asked a venerable old chief, a large landowner in Milne Bay who had known the old days and had seen them pass, how he accounted for the decrease. "He paused only for a few seconds," Abel wrote, "and then, in his aristocratic way, he said, in his high-pitched voice: Before the *Evangelia* came we were a strong people; we are a weak people today because we have refused to listen to the Word of God, and prefer our own dark ways!"

The large families common amongst the Mission people, a sure sign of their new outlook and of the healthy progressive life they lived, were proof enough that in the Gospel lay the antidote to the racial suicide that was threatened. The depressing picture of stagnation, presented by many villages, impelled Abel to redouble his efforts and made the success of the Kwato Association a matter of vital importance.

Remember Iosia (he wrote) and others who have passed on; and remember those with us now who are not declining. The

difficulties must not deter us, they must spur us on. We must with all speed increase our numbers and intensify our efforts in every direction. We need to be influencing as many young people as possible if we are to combat that menace (declension). We need to be in a position to open our doors to very young boys and girls.

A united fight for the Lord for the full salvation of the Papuan can only be if we have the door open wide to do a careful and intensive work. THOROUGH must be our watchword.

This urgent need, together with the problem of the education of his own children, forced Abel reluctantly to accede to the British Committee's advice that he should return to England to secure further help. A large part of the work was now self-supporting, and the industrial training was financed by Government grants from native taxation funds, which are devoted entirely to native benefits. But if the work was to advance, and if new helpers were to be found, there must be a larger backing through the enlistment of "prayer-partners." The more adequate support of Christian people at home was required. At this time the work was known to only a restricted circle of friends within the ranks of the L. M. S. constituency, whose first claim was the work of the parent Mission.

With hands already more than full, Abel had vision for a larger scope. It irked him that commercial ventures should receive the best of everything, while God's great enterprise should seem in want. The committee in England wrote, urging him to return in order to keep interest alive at the home base. As he prayed over his affairs, the need of a shelved furlough was borne upon him, and he wrote to Miss Parkin, who was enjoying a well-earned rest in Australia:

I wonder what you will say to this? I feel that I ought to stick it out here and battle away at least for another three years. But there is need for helpers. There are the children; and again it really is no use going on like this. It will wreck the whole thing if we attempt to undertake all this work alone. We are marking time and not forging ahead.

After the death of the beloved Chairman, Abel had been summoned to Sydney to meet with the Committee there in order to discuss the copious notes and jottings of impressions and opinions that Williamson had left among his papers. Their first meeting was a solemn one. Abel brought with him a framed enlargement of a bird's-eye view of Kwato, taken from a mountain on the island opposite. It made a great impression on all present. Williamson's thoughts on extension, gleaned from his notes, were unanimously adopted, and Abel was asked to go to England to widen the circle of friends and, if possible, to secure funds for further extension.

He expressed a great deal of his vision for the future, and his thoughts on the imperative need for better educational standards, as follows:

What we must try to avoid is giving these people a smattering of knowledge, and keeping successive generations going and coming on a mental diet of nothing more nourishing.

Our village schools must be considerably improved. Not to be afraid of a large term under a system of selecting and grading, some of our scholars should pass on, stage by stage, to a university. We are not immediately contemplating Oriel windows and cloisters and the granting of degrees! Nevertheless, there is far more danger of our being too low than too high in the Lord's service. The age we live in does not favour the mediocre in anything. What we are seriously advocating is an educational system more adequate to the needs of the work than we have at present, and one which would be worthy of the name. We stress the immense importance to the future in our being allowed to deal with the education of these children so as to make the best of them. We are alive to the fact that the Papuan can never grow into the useful, intelligent man he is capable of becoming unless we are prepared to give him a wider vision upward and outward by a system of education which will cultivate his faculties to the full. So far this has never been attempted, and our missionary labours suffer in consequence.

"Personally, I have no doubt whatever of your success,"

wrote the Lieutenant-Governor, Sir Hubert Murray, when he learned of the plans for further extension. "I wish to assure you again of the intense interest that members of the Papuan Government—myself most of all—take in your Association, and of our earnest wishes for its success. You may be certain of our full appreciation of the great assistance that your Association will give us in our administration."



A PAPUAN VILLAGE DANCER



## XV

### A TIME OF TESTING

THE journey to England was a long experience of unfolding delight, and for once Abel had his family with him to share its joys and honours. This was a rare treat to one to whom enjoyment unshared was robbed of half of its charm. He threw off the cares of the past years, with an irrepressible boyishness that time had never managed to kill, made the most of every new experience in the long panorama of the voyage. This included a day of Honolulu's brightly-coloured allurements, where all the familiar vegetation of their own adopted land was to be seen in lavish perfection of cultivation. A week was spent in the midst of the iron grandeur of towering snow-capped mountains, where log cabins and pine forests provided the true essence of the Canadian Rockies. Many new and unfamiliar sights and sounds were met, as the family travelled eastward across the prairies to the big American cities. An unforgettable day at Niagara in early June was spent browsing in the sun in the Canadian side, listening to the thunder of the Falls, and gazing at the screen of white mist that rises continually in a fantastic veil spray. Even the icebergs at the mouth of the St. Lawrence contributed some part to the magic spell of the journey.

On arrival in England the family made straight for Over Stowey, the little Somersetshire village on the Quantocks, where the grandmother lived in retirement as she neared the century mark. Here Abel enjoyed a glorious fortnight of unhampered holiday in a spot so remote that the result of a certain international sporting event, for which Abel as usual was all anticipation, reached Samarai before it filtered its way to this corner in the undulating patchwork of Somersetshire landscape.

The family occupied an ancient and historic thatched cottage in a dell, with the meadows sloping up on all sides and a little white lane running past the house over the Quantock hills. It had once been tenanted by Coleridge and owned by his literary friend and creditor, Tom Poole. Its parlour, with heavy oak beams that were perilously low, had often given hospitality to the little circle of kindred spirits that had planned the Lyrical Ballads. Abel read Wordsworth and went for long rambles with his children to Minehead and the borders of Devon, to Holford and Alfoxden, and through the adjoining woods in which the manuscript of the *Ancient Mariner* was first read aloud in the kind but critical ears of Dorothy Wordsworth. These blissful days, in which Abel drank deeply of the glories of high summer, passed all too quickly. He then turned to the onerous task ahead.

The first week in London was spent in hunting up old friends, as well as sightseeing with his sons. Always a Londoner, Abel had a great love for the city of his birth. Little known churches, and museums in hidden city lanes, were sought out, as well as the more celebrated glories that enshrine the spirit and history of the nation. He wrote of being "most cordially welcomed. Yesterday I had invitations to three Pall Mall clubs to lunch. Sorry, impossible to accept more than one!" He was welcomed by the L. M. S. at a meeting of their Southern Committee which he addressed, giving an outline of recent accomplishments at Kwato and his aims in coming to England. "Questions were asked," he wrote. "H—— was first. 'How does Mr. Abel manage to dodge time and preserve his youth?' To this I recommended Mr. H—— to try hard work, which caused laughter." Abel's youthful appearance amazed his contemporaries in England. Though close to sixty, he was as upright as ever, and his hair was as black and as thick as it had ever been.

The general chaos that followed the war was at its height. The daily papers told a woeful tale of suffering and want, and were filled with heartrending pictures of starvation in Russia. The number of unemployed in England was breaking all pre-

vious records. "It is the wrong time to be promoting the needs of Papua," he wrote to Miss Parkin at Kwato, "when in England there are thousands upon thousands of unemployed, and in Europe cannibalism is being practiced amongst starving, civilized people." The chairman of the Kwato Extension wrote in a pessimistic strain:

The old country is now staggering under the tremendous burdens caused by the war. Unemployment is very great and trade is very bad. You could not possibly have chosen a worse time to come. (It had not been of Abel's choosing.) We do not want in any way to throw cold water on your enthusiasm. We quite understand that it is your work and we are profoundly grateful to God and to you for your devotion to it.

News from Kwato told of a phenomenal rainfall that held up all operations for three months and of a serious outbreak of influenza. Through Government regulations and quarantine Kwato had escaped, but Miss Parkin had spent strenuous weeks in the centres where the epidemic was raging and had ended by becoming ill herself. In spite of this, her letters were full of hope. "A very bracing Kwato breeze," Abel described them. Naturally his thoughts were much centred across the world, where his work lay, and he wrote back:

Our last thoughts at night are always about you and the work at Kwato. When we are going to rest you are beginning the work of the following morning. On Sundays we are going to bed when you are going to worship, and we are just closing our eyes to sleep when the sermon begins!

\* \* \* \* \*

You greatly cheered us. You had everything to make you despondent, but your words were brave and hopeful. We need your buoyant letters sometimes. It is hard graft here, and humdrum; but it's the Lord's, and He will see us through. Plenty of pessimists here in England.

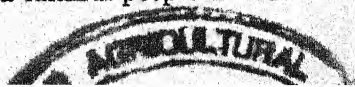
For a year Abel travelled the length and breadth of the country addressing meetings of every description. He spoke at the Annual Meeting of the L. M. S. in the Queen's Hall, and at

the centenary celebrations of the Liverpool Auxiliary of the Society, and was in great demand as a speaker. He produced a profusely illustrated pamphlet entitled *Up from Savagery*, which gave a comprehensive summary of his work and its aims. He also wrote many articles for various periodicals, both of missionary and Empire interest.

Travelling continually, again and again he accounted himself privileged for the opportunities his work brought in meeting many choice spirits in the Christian Church. But at the end of a year the fact remained that he had, to all appearances, failed to attain his main object. Whatever interest he may have succeeded in arousing in the Mission, time was passing and there was no sign that any support for the work was forthcoming. He was perplexed and hard pressed to know what to do next.

The year had been a tremendously busy one. Abel was his own manager entirely, and with his travelling and public speaking he also had a formidable correspondence. He kept in close touch with the affairs at Kwato, anticipating every exigency with his advice, remembering them in their various needs, and doing all possible to lighten their burdens from his distance. He wrote constantly to individual Papuans and leaders in the Church. He was often conscious of the inspiration of their prayers and knew that never a day passed when he was not upheld, by village churches, in Papuan homes in many scattered hamlets, and especially at the noon-day prayer-meetings that had become an institution at all the stations. He also managed to keep the Kwato Press busy with copy and proofs for a revised version of St. Mark's Gospel. Thus he was devoting all his mind to the needs of Papua, and every ounce of his energy as well.

The passing of seemingly fruitless months in England burdened him still more to give to his utmost. The year, from all points of view, was a testing of faith, but he was determined that it should be merely a testing. "We must be absolutely sure of our ground," he wrote, "and wait in confidence the Lord's time. He is only waiting for a faithful people in order



to give us further opportunities and blessings. He withholds what would otherwise ruin us."

The trial of his faith included his own financial problems, the finding of ways and means for the education of his family, and the demands of supporting a household in civilization on a small missionary salary. "Rent! Coal! Electric light! Yes, there is plenty of opportunity for faith. But the Lord has a purpose in bringing us low. When that is served He will uplift us, and for this day of sunshine we wait and pray."

His relaxation was found in his family and in the companionship of his children and the fun there would always be when he came home. He shed his years when he was with young people and inevitably would find himself a boy once more. He would appreciate the homecoming keenly after a long round of his "perpetual talking campaign," as he called it.

The outlook seemed hopeless, but he battled on in faith, refusing point-blank to worry, and even amazing himself by his freedom from anxiety. "The only bright thing about it is that I am undoubtedly laying more and more of the burden upon the Lord. He is perhaps waiting for the full surrender before He opens the windows of heaven to us, and I am prepared to make it."

One day two friends were mounting the stairway of the Reform Club of London. The Englishman turned to his American guest and said: "There is a man you would like to meet," pointing out a man who looked as though the strong white sun of the earth's far corners had put a swarthy tan into his face. An introduction followed, and so, through Dr. Stuart Holden, Abel met William R. Moody, the son of the famous American evangelist. The result was a cordial invitation to visit Northfield and to speak at the summer conference, for the conduct of which Mr. Moody was responsible.

Abel had been doing some hard thinking and was exercised to know what the next step should be. He and Mrs. Abel had set aside a special day of prayer about the future, and now they received a definite assurance that God's leading was in this unexpected opening. The message for that fateful day was

found in the record of Hannah's great petition: "She ate and drank and her countenance was no more sad. They rose up early, and worshipped and went on their way." Thus he wrote of it to Kwato:

We look to the Lord Himself to make the provision He sees necessary. One thing is certain, we must not by any anxiety take over again the burden we have surrendered to Him. The testing of our faith is more precious than silver and gold.

We had a good landmark day on June the 8th. The assurance came to us both that all would be well. A little more patience. *He will do it.* "There was a great rain." This followed the three and a half years drought (1 Kings 18). Be on the *qui vive*; good news is pending.

The following day a surprise came by the post in the form of a large gift for the work. This was accepted as a seal and confirmation of the experience of the previous day. Abel believed that God would only withhold the answer to their prayers in favour of some far better plan. In view of the utter lack of success of the past year, it was with sublime audacity that Abel declared to his committee, whilst commenting on encouraging reports from the field, "I am certain that we are not mistaken when we affirm that the time is ripe for us to go much further and deeper with our educational work than we have ever been able to do in the past."

He faced the new adventure of a campaign in America with little idea as to what his plans would be. He believed that there was something big in store for Kwato, and he set himself to expect great things from God. This venture appeared to him as a supreme test of his own character and faith, and he approached the coming experience solemnly.

I must be equal to the occasion (he wrote to Kwato), which means nothing more than trusting Him, but it means that He is waiting for us, not we for Him. For my part, I will do everything I can by personal surrender and effort to secure the opportunities our people need—and that some of them richly deserve. Any day the Lord may open the way. Tell all at



Kwato to be prepared for it in heart and life, and let us be fully prepared for it ourselves.

Call the Church together. Tell them I rely upon their earnest and constant prayers. It is possible that God is going to test our faith as it has never been tested before, and He is going to test our lives—everyone of us, every member of the Church in Papua, as well as ourselves—before He opens the windows of Heaven and gives us our heart's desire. If he withholds, our lack must be more blessed than all the money in the world.

Once more his old friends rallied round. Loyal wishes were showered upon him as he prepared to sail for America. "Good luck in the name of the Lord," they wished him, one and all. Sir Evan James, venerable, decrepit, and now in his last days, dictated letters of introduction from his invalid's chair. "Tell them I shall be very proud indeed to testify to the splendid work you have done in Papua," he wrote, bidding Abel Godspeed.

"We must look for miracles," Mrs. Abel wrote. "Our work has been a miracle from the start. And since the bombshell was thrown in our midst in 1916 until now—think of them all!"

A big task lay ahead, Charles Abel was unknown in America and few there had ever heard of Kwato. He had to begin all over again to present the need of this far-off country to the Christian public, and he had to begin at the beginning.

He carried with him a cordial letter from the L. M. S., commending him to "All friends of the human race on the other side of the Atlantic." But one of the Directors, an annual visitor to the United States, told him frankly that, while wishing him all success, he doubted whether he could even raise his expenses.

In spite of the welter of last-minute calls, Abel managed to make a last concession to himself, and stole a brief respite at Lords to enjoy a glorious afternoon watching the Oxford and Cambridge cricket match. "I leave on Saturday," he wrote, as the sailing drew near. "Rather like going out into the wilderness! But the Lord has often done great things in wildernesses."



## XVI

### LENGTHENED CORDS

**M**Y heart was with Christ as I descended the gangway, and as I stepped ashore I prayed that every step might be ordered by Him and for His glory."

The introduction to America was by way of the Northfield conference and through the hospitable home of Mr. and Mrs. William R. Moody. This family took Abel to their hearts and the friendship that sprang up, and the fellowship that he enjoyed at the "Homestead," was one of the rich experiences of his later life.

The crowded gatherings in the Northfield Auditorium offered a great opportunity, and Abel prayed hard to be enabled to say the right thing. "I shall know when a great work of grace has been achieved in my heart when I can cast the anxiety of speaking in public upon Christ," he wrote. His addresses made a great impression, and were enthusiastically received. "The most thrilling missionary speaker we have ever had at Northfield," was Mr. Moody's verdict that was endorsed by many. The journalistic imagination of reporters exceeded itself in the Boston newspapers, and there Abel saw himself described in various headlines as explorer, scientist, statesman, agriculturist, industrial leader, and philologist. He was genuinely troubled about the veracity of these claims and their disproportion to fact. However, by the time his itinerary had given the Chicago press an opportunity of decking out his fast expanding career for the benefit of the public, he had learned not to be unduly concerned about these American methods of publicity.

At Northfield his prayers were answered and he was wonderfully fortified for his work. At the end of the first week he wrote:

Five times I spoke. Each time for forty minutes in the

Auditorium. I have no further fear of big meetings and big buildings. This experience has cured me. The Lord has been more than gracious. If only we can learn to let Him do the work with our hands and our feet and through our minds and our mouths! We have so much to learn about the simplicity of faith.

Abel was a welcome guest, with his humour and his yarns which he would relate with his usual piquancy of speech. He did not realize that even the most commonplace details of his life in Papua, that might come out quite unintentionally in the course of conversation, would fascinate his American friends. One day when he happened to refer to the little fat-bellied fish, common in Papua, that clamber up the twining mangrove roots that rise out of the sea, he found to his amazement that he had caused a small sensation. He was implored to let out the startling information in public that the fishes in Papua climb trees!

Abel had a unique way of telling a story. It was the genius of the lightning sketch. With a few expert touches he could conjure up a scene and make it live. He enjoyed telling stories and derived a recurring amusement from past humorous experiences. He was at once inveigled into amusing his friends in this way as, much to his regret, his reputation had followed him from the steamer. Some of his stories became quite a vogue, and he often had cause to repent his rashness in ever having been tempted to repeat them.

A great deal of time was spent at Northfield in praying over his work and preparing himself for it. When he came to America his plan of action was entirely unformed, and he waited for the way to open before him. New Guinea was an unknown field to most Americans, and many who became interested in his work were anxious to bring him opportunities for giving his message in other centres. An extensive itinerary was laid out. Mr. Moody spared no pains in giving him introductions and was only impeded by Abel's own unwillingness to accept opportunities that he considered too exalted for his humble message. His new friends were so enthralled by the story of his work that they were anxious to secure the widest hearing

for him, not only for his work's sake, but for the benefit of the Christian Church at large.

"I am told that I must say more about myself," he wrote; "and that people like the personal note. I thank God I hate it. The commonest fault I see in Christian workers is vanity. They are always looking at themselves in the glass of public opinion."

He shrank from the adulation that is the portion of an acceptable speaker, and from what he termed "all this puff," boostings of chairmen and placard advertisements.

Describing a certain meeting that he addressed, he wrote: "I looked at my boots while the chairman puffed me up for what I had done, or was reported to have done." And of another occasion: "The chairman covered me with tinsel to begin and end with—'Moffat, Livingstone and Abel!' I could have vomited on the rostrum. People will make a god out of mud, if they can't get brass!" It irked him to have to tell so much that seemed like a recitation of his own exploits, and he laboured to keep himself out of the picture. "It is difficult to stand aside altogether so that only Christ is seen and His message is heard," he wrote.

Writing from an atmosphere of celebrated city churches and the renowned preachers that they attracted from overseas to occupy pulpits, he declares:

I am not a little sick of the rotten hero-worship that I seem to have been brought into contact with. These great preachers are weighed up and valued as if they are marketable, or as if they were professional performers. X—— anxious if he saw a few empty pews. Oh! How seldom we see the great and the meek under the same hat!

Modesty is not an overworked virtue on the part of most adventurers from overseas, so that his reticence had a certain amount of appeal, and perhaps netted in more admiration than if he had been a little more frank about his own undoubted part in his story. Henceforth he could not escape allusions to his distaste for publicity in every announcement that concerned him. Abel's unwillingness to attempt to reach the ear of the

intelligentsia through various New York clubs was regretted by some of his friends. He was looking first for the backing of "Prayer-partners," and could not see how his work would be benefitted outside of Christian circles.

An extract from one of his letters gives a glimpse of the kind of thing to which he had to accustom himself:

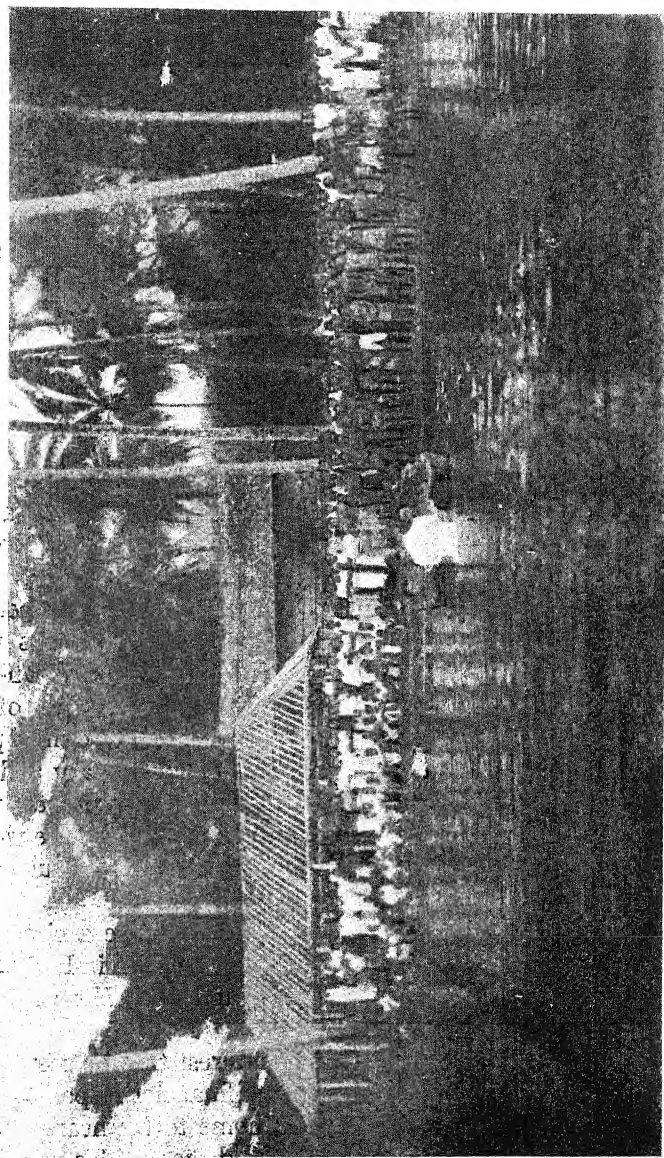
Outside there was a notice on a placard. COME AND HEAR THE MISSIONARY HERO WHO HAS, etc., etc. I asked the superintendent why he had put that nonsense up, and he said, "That, Sir, is an exact extract from Mr. Moody's letter; you square with him." I said to him, "All Mr. Moody's jokes come at the end of his stories, so I'll get on the platform and let you see this one!"

There is no doubt about the impression that Abel made upon his audiences. "He is endowed with a rich fund of humour, the most interesting missionary speaker I have ever heard," wrote one of his hearers. "He showed us that it was not enough to seek to make Papuans good, but to make them *good for something*." Another testified: "I have not heard a speaker that has more deeply impressed me, combining, as he does, evangelicalism, and evangelistic fervour, with a statesman's grasp of the needs of the people. His vision is indicative of his character." And another, who was later on to play no small part in the welfare of Papua, wrote: "I heard a missionary address last Sunday which was by far the best mission presentation I have ever listened to." The writer little realized that he was to be called to a service of intercession and support through the same chance opportunity of hearing this message.

Abel worked hard and unceasingly as he made his rounds of the eastern and middle-western cities. "I go forth in His strength, to do His will, and take up my cross. The Lord be magnified!"

In spite of his popularity and the interest that he aroused in his work, there was no large response. He tried to bring a burden of the need home to his people, while he asked for their prayers and told

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A BAPTISMAL SERVICE IN MILNE BAY.

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[illegible]

made no personal appeals for money. During a special time of prayer and heart-searching before he left England, he had received the impression that, with his initiative, he was apt to take too much upon himself. He set himself to commit the responsibility to God, including the financial results. The opening sentence of a diary record of his American experiences seems to express what had come, more and more, to be his outlook with regard to this work. "If ye ask, I will do it." This diary will simply record *His doing*." During these busy, yet apparently fruitless days, he wrote:

I'm not pushing; only walking about and seeking the Lord's opportunity for me. I pray God to direct me every day and every minute. He has promised to supply, and it is our part to let patience have her perfect work. I do pray that I may be made fit and meet for the Master's use. I must stick to it until the Lord finds *me*, and us, and the Papuan Church *ready* to receive what He can give any day.

He made many new friends as he travelled about the country. He also met with many *es*. ("The Lord has some odd disciples," he once commented, "probably of whom I am chief!") In seeking the help and prayers of Christian people there were some homes that he entered in which he had far more to give than to receive. With his colourful, abounding life he bore his witness more than once to the rich but barren. "Such a mixture of piety and luxury!" he wrote after visiting some of the latter. The range of audiences that he addressed was also wide. One night he would speak at a downtown mission "mostly very poor people, and some very tired and hungry; three, at least, had a very sweet sleep, quite undisturbed." The following night he would preach in a well-appointed church. "Americans believe in more comfortable worship than we do," he remarked when he first arrived in the country. The most unusual of the gatherings he attended was a special celebration that he described as a "kind of missionary orgy," where nearly thirty missionaries spoke for two and a half minutes



each. Once he went from a drawing-room meeting to a prison cell.

We were all locked in a barred room. Two wardens stood on guard, and a third stood outside with a firearm. I said a few words, and then prayed with them before a harsh gong struck and they rose to attention and filed out to their cells.

Twelve of the prisoners responded to an appeal that Abel based upon the call of Matthew, and "what the Lord could see in a hopeless publican to induce Him to say, Follow Me." A fortnight later seven of those who had taken this step were leading in prayer and thanksgiving and the gaoler testified to a changed atmosphere in the prison. Some months later, while waiting for a train at a middle-western railway depot, Abel felt a hand upon his shoulder and, turning round, was joyfully greeted by a well-dressed youth. The stranger reminded him of a certain gaol in Massachusetts, and told a thrilling story of his upward climb since they had met behind the bars.

Time was passing, and still there was no cheering word to send either to Kwato or to the family in England that was following his every movement with their prayers. Abel accepted this delay as a necessary discipline for himself, and prayed for patience. "That ye may be perfect and entire—WANTING NOTHING," he quoted in his letters home. When news came from Kwato bringing the usual ray of joy, he wrote: "This heartens me to go on trusting for all He sees we need, until He sees it right to give."

A sleepless night, thinking over his affairs in a Toronto hotel, was turned to good account in prayer for guidance. Peace, and assurance that his prayer was heard, came to him in the small hours.

At three I got up and read my Bible. I opened it at the fiftieth Psalm and just read over and over again verses 12 to 15. It was a great comfort to me, but I was able to say to my Lord that my sleeplessness was not due to anxiety about my apparent success with my work. "Call upon me. . . . I will

deliver thee." I had called and was confident deliverance would come.

There were "record weeks" for the number of meetings addressed, which were only to be superseded by further records; busy days, meeting new people; beginning at the beginning all over again at each new centre. "I felt very tired and done out after my third big service," reads a typical extract of these times, "but I had the joyous feeling that the Lord had graciously answered all your prayers, and had seen me safely and successfully through a busy week." On the other hand, there were times when he seemed to have failed even to make the fact of his presence in a city recognized; wasted days, when even the very minutes he felt were of importance, as his time was fast drawing to a close. This was perhaps the greatest test of all. "I have to lean hard," he wrote once when he had failed to secure any opportunities for speaking. Alone in a New York hotel on one such occasion, he redeemed the time by translating the Epistle to the Colossians into Suau; racking his brain for a phrase that would correctly convey "the riches of His glory," in that all too sparse tongue—and this within crashing sound of an elevated railway!

Abel addressed the students at Hartford, Princeton, and Yale. Some of these occasions he welcomed, and others, he was quite candid with himself, he did not. "I so often felt what a relief it would be if an accident—not fatal—would come like an angel of mercy and save me from some of these appointments!" he wrote. It was the unsympathetic audience that Abel found hard to face; the purely philanthropic outlook, those whose sole interest in his subject was anthropological or scientific, or those who were confessedly anti-missionary. A meeting at the Century Club of New York, and the vast audience at the Chicago Sunday Evening Club, were departures from the usual gatherings of missionary supporters. On the latter occasion he was informed that an evangelical message was not the usual fare provided for the 3,500 odd who attended this assembly in the Orchestral Hall, and that only men of international repute

were invited to the platform. This, however, did not exalt him and the story that he told there was chiefly concerned with the grace of God. That its evidence in Papua was in arresting and unusual forms did not alter this fact; it was a story that he told with ringing conviction, to the glory of God. "It must be His message, and no trimming," he decided, on the eve of this big gathering. He always remembered this occasion for its victory: for the strength and liberty that was given him; and voice equal to that great space. "I never had a more definite answer to prayer," he wrote. "It had made me hot and cold by turns to think that I was to stand there and, to put it carnally, 'pose' as a man of international renown." Even the microphone that "reared its head in front of the speaker like a poised snake," and which had, at other times, peculiarly disarming effect upon Abel, was reduced to insignificance. He succeeded in making clear to his packed audience what Christ had done for Papuans, and what He could do for every hungry heart present that evening.

With the urgent necessity for his return to Kwato, Abel had now to face the prospect of turning homewards with his mission unfulfilled. But what was to all outward appearances the moment of defeat was for him, inwardly, the supreme moment of triumph.

We must pray for grace (he wrote) to be perfectly willing to give up the things we have set our hearts upon. We must not merely *submit* to His ruling: a prisoner has to do that. There must be triumphant faith, giving us the certainty of His presence and blessing. It's an adventure if only we could see it; it is a glorious adventure. I mean Kwato, and the whole problem we are trying to meet. We must seek His way of meeting it. He knows best, and I am learning in the school of discipline to rejoice when He refuses what I ask. It means that He will give, only in some other and better way. All we must do is to give up the idea of Kwato being *ours*, and get the idea of its being *His*.

"I am satisfied," he wrote, "not merely resigned." At that victorious moment the tide began to turn, and homes and hearts

were opened to him. A circle of friends in Montclair, New Jersey, became interested.<sup>1</sup> They felt that Abel needed the backing and co-operation of an American Council. One evening, while staying in one of these Montclair homes, which had become a haven of refreshment, Abel found an envelope in his room containing the promise of a substantial gift from his host, inscribed: "In gratitude of our Heavenly Father, and as a slight expression of our great appreciation of what England has unselfishly and nobly borne for humanity round the world during these last years. . . ." Abel was singing the doxology in his heart that night. "I went to bed very grateful to God and woke next morning with a heart warmed by His nearness and goodness."

Wonderful days followed. "I had been living much with Christ, and had been made clearly aware of His presence all day," Abel wrote. One Sunday afternoon, there was a long and memorable walk, in which the friends talked and prayed over their plans for forming a small committee to sponsor the work. They discussed matters in a small railway depot, where they took shelter from the rain.

This suggestion we felt was not theirs only, it was the Lord's provision for our work, and my heart swelled almost to bursting point with gratitude to Him who has promised and *will* perform. My mind flew to Kwato. As I walked those streets my spirit was amongst our own people. How surely He keeps His word. . . . Great things were happening: great things for our people, for which how many hours have we prayed!

Abel spent sleepless nights for sheer joy. The new group of friends formed the New Guinea Evangelization Society as an auxiliary to the Kwato Association. They met together many times for prayer, and conference, and at Thanksgiving, and decided to send Abel back to England to spend Christmas with

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<sup>1</sup> Delavan L. Pierson, Editor of *The Missionary Review of the World*, and a son of the late Dr. Arthur T. Pierson, introduced other friends, including Walter McDougall and Hugh R. Monro and Arthur Meeker, all of whom also became actively associated with the Kwato Mission.

his wife and children, after which he was to return for a three-month's pre-arranged itinerary. Reports had recently come of Mrs. Abel's ill health, so that the unexpected prospect of returning to her just then was no less than mercy upon mercy. "Thanksgiving Day! I should think it *was*. I did thank God for this great and unexpected gift. I was so elated that I had to hold myself in, or I should have shouted for joy. . . . Won't we make the Hampshire wilds ring? Won't we have some good times, with Him and with each other? I can hardly contain myself for joy," he wrote to a daughter in England, as he anticipated Christmas with his family.

Abel went on his way rejoicing, with a letter from the newly-formed Society to the committee in London, laying before them definite proposals for the formation of an American branch of the Mission to conserve the work that had been done in America. "I can hardly restrain myself, after all these months of drought and lonely labour, both for you and for me," Abel wrote to Miss Parkin at Kwato as he compared the present situation with his outlook three short weeks before. "The Lord has truly opened the windows of heaven." His message to Kwato was: "We must be prepared for all the good things coming to us. We must receive them with clean hands and clean hearts. This must be a time of heart-searching for everyone, and of complete surrender to the Lord, who has done such wonderful things for us."

Abel was full of optimism when he returned to America after the brief respite in England. "The future is very full of glorious enterprise," he wrote from the steamer to a son at Cambridge, who was studying in the hope of one day following him. "The only question we need to put to ourselves is: Are we worthy? Is there any part of our life reserved for Him, anything in me that He claims, withheld?" And again he wrote:

We shall yet rejoice. Oh what a day that will be! I would like to feel the rejoicing will be ours even if no further monetary help comes. We must try to realize that the cause of our

rejoicing lies so much deeper than in His giving us what we think we need, exactly in the way we seek it. We must rejoice always. He is daily crowning our life with His goodness. Truly our cup runneth over.

Abel's work in America was now a very different proposition from his previous experience. He found a well-planned itinerary awaiting him, with introductions at each centre. His new friends were whole-heartedly fulfilling their words to "stand back of him" in his work in America. "The more you know him, the better you will love him," read a letter of introduction that was typical of the friendship of these men. "Take him and his work into your heart and life, and you will receive great blessing."

The months began to slip by, busy months of unceasing activity, and while the financial response was far from encouraging, Abel was far from being discouraged. He was learning to be a disciplined soldier in the fight of faith. "God knows the value of delay," he wrote. "I praise the Lord that He withholds. It must be for the best. Let us not say it, but absolutely *know* it."

At the end of three months of continual travelling he wrote: "Always meeting new people, and this continually with a background of meetings, meetings, meetings! I feel tired. I wish I could go to some quiet spot and not have to talk to any one but God." The trial of his faith continued, but through it all he experienced a vivid sense of the presence of God. "I want really to rejoice in the suspense, so confident of ultimate success that the waiting for it, in God's time and way, is an adventure of delight. It seems evident that He wants to put me to a more severe proof, and I must not fail. . . . I feel that I can do anything now for the One who grows daily more precious to me. He has given me so much joy in His fellowship; so much delight in His word. And He becomes so real, and overrides all careless blunders," he wrote on an occasion when his plans had hopelessly miscarried with the result of a wanton waste of his fast diminishing time,



Three weeks within the time of his sailing found him apparently no further ahead, but still buoyant with hope. "We are being led very near to disaster, but 'it shall not come nigh thee,' so we'll look up. The Lord has got to do something big for us before many days now. I have been waiting for it for months; there remain only three weeks."

Suddenly once more the outlook changed. Abel sailed from America according to his plan, not only with the financial provision he had sought, but with definite proposals for the co-operation of a permanent council in America, to conserve the widespread interest that had been aroused in Kwato. "I feel as though I were treading on air," he wrote as he embarked with the best of news to take back with him to the field. "I feel like the disciples who had toiled all night and had caught nothing. Then, at the end of the long, fruitless toil, came the Master, and at His command they cast in the net again, and the result was a record draught."

A short time before Abel's departure from America he was in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, at a Christian Layman's conference. Here he had hoped to meet Samuel Boggs, the President of the Gideons, and one who made all concerns of the Kingdom of God his own. Mr. Boggs had corresponded with James Chalmers, John G. Paton, and other pioneers of the South Seas in years gone by, and was anxious to meet Abel. A futile afternoon was spent searching for each other between the conference and the hotel, both hot on each other's trail and just missing one another. At last Mr. Boggs announced from the platform: "If Charles Abel, of New Guinea, is in the audience, will he please rise!" Abel stood up, and the meeting, which was to have important consequences, at last took place. Mr. Boggs was eager to hear Abel's story, and, having heard it, the burden of the work in Papua was forthwith his own. Within a week he had interested other friends in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh in this new enterprise, with the result that the number of praying partners was more than doubled.

Abel had some wonderful times of fellowship with these American partners in the work. They were one with him in



every respect, and their affection and whole-hearted co-operation amazed him. They were determined to take their share of the burdens. "This is our job," they assured Abel. And one of them wrote: "We want to hold the ropes so that you can feel the tug and support." For all the inspiration that they brought they, in their turn, repeatedly thanked Abel for the inspiration of fellowship with him in the Gospel. Their meetings were memorable occasions, and the Prince George Hotel, in New York, became hallowed for its associations of those first gatherings for prayer and conference. "Every meeting of our Board is held in such a spirit of consecration that it almost seems as though the Lord Himself was visibly present, as we believe He is in spirit," testified one of the members.

It was from this atmosphere of keen interest and strong backing that Abel went forth to return to Kwato, overflowing with gratitude for all that had transpired. Waiting in San Francisco for his steamer across the Pacific, he reviewed his story, amazed at the way he had come and quite at a loss to know how to give worthy expression to his thankfulness to God. Pausing by a little open-air meeting that was being held in a busy thoroughfare of that city, he joined the circle, and when opportunity occurred this passing stranger stood up and testified out of a full heart to his Master's faithfulness; a spontaneous action in which he surprised himself.

In going through his note-book he came across a list of subjects for special prayer that he had written two years previously. This list included the needs of Kwato, the details of their sojourn in England, his children's education, all of which had been provided for as the days had unfolded. The new council, through the generosity of some of its members, had insisted upon including his children's education in their plans for the future of Kwato. Abel wrote to his wife, reminding her of the wonderful sequence of events in their lives:

Think, dear, of all that has happened since then. How wonderful! How can we do other than fully trust Him? Let us

rejoice in any appearance of difficulty; in any period of darkness. Nothing is hard to Him, and it is never dark where He is, and these times of testing must always find us TRUE. It shall be so.

Again he repeated the word that had so often been reiterated at important occasions throughout their life, and one that was poignant with meaning, and full of solemnity for them both: "*Remember, all the way. . .*"

Abel was cheered by the number of telegrams and letters of farewell that reached him on board the *Ventura* as she turned her bows seawards through the Golden Gate. They were all full of affection, promise of backing, pledges to prayer, warm appreciation, good wishes, and assurance of confidence. A year ago he had come to America unknown, now he was leaving behind him a number of staunch friends, who had taken him to their hearts, and whose pledge to share his burdens were the outcome of their faith in God, and their personal affection for Abel himself. "I don't see how any one could grip our hearts more than you have," wrote one of their friends in a farewell letter; "the tie cannot be broken. Your friends here are God-fearing men, and I don't believe He is going to allow us to fail in our task of standing by you through thick and thin." Another revealed his personal regard for his new-found friend: "The other evening I was alone, and you came to my mind. I got the lantern out and showed the Papuan pictures to myself on the wall, and it seemed to bring you closer to me." A third wrote: "It has been a joy to have met with you, and will be a privilege to hold you up in prayer." Some friends whom he had found in the brief stay in Denver, on his way through to the Pacific coast, confessed: "We do have such good times praying for you." Abel's greatest hopes for a backing of sympathy and prayer for his work had been fulfilled, and he returned to Papua having accomplished more than he had even asked or thought.

## XVII

### THE MAN AND HIS FAMILY

**T**HE following telescopic glimpse, given in a description of Kwato, shows Charles Abel in his normal setting, in the work he loved so well:

As we approach Kwato we see a beautiful little launch rocking at anchor off the wooden jetty, with a flag flying at her masthead and on it a white cross. On the wharf stands a bronzed, sturdy Englishman in "ducks"—the Reverend C. W. Abel, who has built up this work for the native race, not for personal gain, but in the spirit of the Cross which flies on the pennant of his launch.

Of the character of this man, whose name has become inseparably linked with Kwato, his intimate friend, the Reverend A. P. Campbell, of Sydney, recounts: "Faith, humility, simplicity, energy, passion and a wonderful charity towards all men—these were the marks of his life, lived in precious communion with his Master. His was 'a high calling of God,' and it was the 'one thing' that claimed him."

A life thus claimed allowed little time for the enjoyment of this world's graces. In art and music Abel preferred those classics whose beauty had been interpreted by long familiarity. Referring to a Handel Festival, which he once attended at the Crystal Palace in England, he wrote: "I went without the slightest idea of what I was going to hear, but the recollection of that afternoon refreshes me often now, and will until time ceases. I don't think I ever heard anything which so stirred me as the Chorus, 'For unto us a Child is born.' It was frantically encored, which seemed out of place."

Once when he was staying in Chicago, his hostess took him to a very "high-brow" concert that expounded the deeps of a certain modern school of music. Celebrated as the performers

were, their work was certainly not for the musically uninitiated. Abel sat patiently in an expensive stall, on one side his hostess, and on the other some long-haired enthusiasts who amazed him by the abandonment of their applause. Half-way through the second interval his hostess whispered pointedly:

"Are you enjoying this?"

"No," he replied truthfully. "Are you?"

"No," she returned.

"As a matter of fact," ventured the guest, "Gilbert and Sullivan is more my style."

"So it is mine. I've been enduring all this for your sake."

Two members of the audience decided that their penance was done, but the doors were closed and they were obliged to sit through to the end.

It took Abel a long time to make a new acquaintance in music, chiefly perhaps, because he lacked the leisure required to an appreciation of the art. However, the high standard of choral music at Kwato bears witness that he was possessed of a keen musical sense. The introduction of part-singing through the tonic sol-fa method, to a people with a remarkable latent aptitude for harmony, has proved to be a rich contribution to the Papuan and a wonderful means of self-expression. A popular evening pastime at Kwato is a competition in which the company is divided into two groups, to each of which is given a piece of music that they have never seen before. Five minutes is allowed in which to practice their pieces, and the best rendering in the four parts wins.

Abel felt that his powers of poetic appreciation were lacking, and this troubled him. The fact that he could enjoy certain poetry did not seem to weigh with him so much as his inability to enjoy all poetry. He once wrote: "I am one of those unfortunate mortals who would give anything to appreciate poetry, but have no gift that way." He quoted St. Loe Strachey's comment on Asquith's essay on Shakespeare's style: "He who has not his pulse raised twenty beats by the following line had better at once forswear the pilgrimage to Parnassus. That golden road is not for him." And this is the line," adds Abel,

"that is supposed to add twenty beats to my pulse: 'Fear no more the heat of sun!' To my poor songless spirit that is no more than if he had said: 'Be careful not to get your feet wet!'"

A great deal that ranks high in literature made no impression on him. He would shake his head disparagingly and say, "There is something I simply haven't got. It is the case of Peter Bell."<sup>1</sup> And yet he could respond to certain poetry. He always carried with him on his launch journeys a volume of Scott or Wordsworth or Burns. Perhaps he understood Wordsworth best for his simple expression of the grandeur of nature, and fragrance of the open-air, which Abel himself knew well.

He used to read a great deal of poetry to his children. Their early education was extremely unconventional. Rather than hand over the responsibility of their upbringing to others, they were kept at Kwato and Mrs. Abel herself taught them. They studied history, natural science and literature with their father, when he could spare the time, not seated at desks in the approved classroom behaviour, but more or less all over their teacher: on the arms of his chair, on his lap, or on a cushion on the floor with a head resting back on his knees. Nor were they conscious of any backwardness when their preparatory days were ended and they went away to school, which was not until they were in their teens.

By no means a voracious reader, the only time that Abel found for the recreation of reading was on his frequent launch journeys. The modern steamer, alas! is too comfortable to impose leisure, and his time at sea would be largely spent in writing, of which there was always no end. Abel's opinions of the books he read were as emphatic as they were characteristic. No artistic value or intrinsic beauty could compensate for an unpleasant taste left behind. "True to life? Yes, such a life. But who wants it carefully written out for that reason? It is only true of unregenerate life," he wrote. Thus, in spite of the

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<sup>1</sup> A primrose by a river's brim  
A yellow primrose was to him,  
And it was nothing more.—*Peter Bell.* WORDSWORTH.

wild solitude of Egdon Heath a diary entry runs: "Read Hardy's *Return of the Native*. I've companied with godless strangers." Conrad's *Rover* was dismissed in a similarly cryptic way: "His characters are unpleasant company." Even one of Galworthy's well-acclaimed successes in modern literature was more than he could stomach; and he had not ventured far in its urbane sophistication before he sent its pages whirling to windward, and returned to his poetry, to the mountain glories of Cumberland, and the romance of the Border, as they breathe through the metres of Wordsworth or Scott.

Looking back upon his private life, Abel once wrote:

How I thank God for all the blessed and precious memories of the days that are gone—truly the good old days—and times we have had together, a loving, closely-knit little family, finding our highest joys at the Throne of Grace, and our keenest enjoyment in the little circle of our happy home, where the most precious woman God ever gave to a man for a wife, or to girls and boys for a mother, made home the House of God, the Gate of Heaven—a sacred place.

The Abels had few earthly ties, and those that they had were precious. Their greatest possessions were their children, home and family life. These were also their luxuries. By "home" no familiar and cherished house of habitation is indicated, but an exquisite, pervading essence, present wherever the family happened to be lodged. Very often this blessed and yearned for atmosphere was beyond Abel's reach. "Oh, what would I give for an Abel 'squash!'" he once wrote when his family were on the other side of the world. "Yes, round an English fire, and with our lovely Queen in the centre, just touching everything with her hand into perfect bliss. Or on an English beach, but with the one centre-piece, and then nothing can go wrong."

It was merely accidental that his heart was turned towards England on this occasion. More often his longings were directed to Australia, where he had so often imagined, and too seldom shared, the joys of the family cottage at Turramurra,



with its garden, and orchard that provided them lavishly with fruit throughout the long Australian summer. But most often home for him was in Papua, and the old Mission House at Kwato was the hallowed scene of much happiness, and inexpressibly dear to him on that account. He often expressed his appreciation of the beloved island. Arriving home at midnight after a terrible journey in a storm, when the coxswain, blinded by the downpour of rain, had managed to steer his course into the China Straits only by the occasional vivid flashes of lightning, Abel wrote: "We braved the rain and came up the hill. Greatly enjoyed the charm of the old place. Oh, how sweet is home! We enjoy knocking about and roughing it, but it is luxury to get back again."

The Mission House, a rambling bungalow that had grown, bit by bit, a wing here and a wing there, and housing a large percentage of the big Papuan family, is built upon the brow of a high hill and sprawls across the edge of a steep and abrupt incline. It commands magnificent views in all directions, of mountains, little islands, sheltered bays and passages, and a stretch of open horizon. Lady Stonehaven, accompanying the then Governor-General on a vice-regal tour of the islands of the Australian Commonwealth, declared that she was reluctant to tear herself away from the enchantment of the panorama seen from the windows of the front verandah. Of the beauty of Kwato, Abel wrote:

Long familiarity, and unspeakably blessed associations, make the place absolutely satisfying to me in every way. I don't pine for an English down, or a Scottish valley, or a Welsh mountain, while I have the western channel to peep through to fairyland, or the magnificent panorama to the east, with Ebuma like a well-cut jewel lying in the bosom of the straits.

The history of Kwato is enshrined in trees which Abel planted to mark important occasions. These were ever a silent reminder of lessons, trials of faith, and victories. "Today the dear old *aiaru* has to go," reads a diary entry that breathes his endearment of these landmarks. "It is too rotten to leave with



safety to the house any longer. It is hollow, and its branches are almost bare of needles. The dear old tree that has whispered to us through the breezes so often of a stilly night, is almost a bare pole now, and soon she will fall."

One day a radiogram arrived bringing news that Mrs. Abel was seriously ill in Sydney. "I must storm heaven for this," he wrote. "Nothing else matters. I feel this morning that the Lord is making a new and heavy demand upon my faith. I must be equal to it." Having prayed over the matter, he eased his feelings with some strenuous gardening, praying while he worked, and finding great relief in digging holes and planting oleander bushes up the short ascent. In days to come these were to remind him of his prayers and pledges and to bloom, with other growing things on Kwato, as a testimony to his Master's faithfulness.

Naturally one with Abel's love of sport found many joys in the open air. Camping in all weathers and in all conditions was his lot throughout life. There were many outstanding occasions to which he always looked back with pleasure: a day's tramp that curiosity led to Epsom, mixing with the motley crowd of gypsies, tipsters, bookies and costermongers on Derby Day; a ramble in the New Forest, or on Epsom Downs, or at golf on some rolling course in Massachusetts; days when he had time to revel in the sun and the wind and the earth's good fragrance. A typical Kwato scene, culled from the diary-letter that he often kept for the benefit of absent members of his family, locates the source of much of his earthly pleasures: "Yesterday I spent a busy day outside. We managed to shift many tons of stone and to make quite a big part of the retaining wall for the enlarged playground. It was holiday work for me, and I had a great time with the boys, all of whom thoroughly enjoyed the work on hand. I mowed the lawn and the tennis court and got very wet, as it was a rare hot day. But I enjoyed the exercise, and especially the smell of the newly-cut grass."

Of the many rôles that Abel had to fill in the course of his life he found his true vocation as a father. He had a great

capacity, not only for sharing the lives of his children, but revelling in them. Play was instinct within him, and he played with his children a great deal, whether it was a romp with them in their earlier days, or boxing and sparring, or hot contests at cricket or tennis when they were grown into youth.

Abel's marriage was supremely happy. Both he and his wife shared the same ideals from the beginning. She had written to him of their marriage: "I want our love to be an investment for our Master; to bring the best out of us, as it must if it be of Him. We must strive to be what He would have us be, if we would be all to each other." Her husband responded eagerly: "I have drunk those words in till they have become a great desire in me. I can't count the riches I have in you, but I want to use my wealth for Christ."

Among the hardest things that Abel had to bear was the parting from his wife and family that so often falls to the missionary's lot. "Soon now we must think of the tearing apart, which I could only face for Him," is an echo from a letter that is both typical and recurrent. Both he and his wife were singularly incomplete and wistful when apart from one another. "You know I am only half here without my loved ones," he apologized once to some friends in Brooklyn with whom he was staying. There were landmarks all over the world that bore for him the memory of past miseries—a dock or a railway terminus where he had seen the last glimpse of his family on a certain occasion; a restaurant whose very name brought shudders back, where they had fortified themselves for a long separation. A certain rock in Australia has always borne the title in the family of "the dismal stone," and is remembered for the solace it once gave, and relief from the strain of a public leave-taking on a thronging wharf. A hearty missionary friend once met Abel when he was deliberately setting his face in the opposite direction of all his heart's joys, and, slapping him on the back, cried jubilantly: "Cheer up, old man, you'll soon get used to it. Why, I haven't seen my wife for three years!" Abel, however, never became used to it. His last parting was as great a wrench as any had been.

During these times of separation from his family, which Abel felt most perhaps for his inability to give help when it was needed, he followed every step of their life in his prayers. He wrote to his wife when she was taking the children to Australia:

You undertake no single duty alone. God bears the weight of all your cares. They are given you that you may by a deliberate act cast them upon Him. Never lift the load His shoulders are waiting to take for you. . . . You have a heavy task before you. I will do what I can; I will pray for you constantly, night and day, when I am awake. I wish I could do more, but the part I can do I will try to do well, and I believe you will find the mountains flatten out before you, and the valleys rise up to meet your feet. That much is in the promise of God to those who walk by faith.

The letters that he wrote to his children he regarded as of first importance. Even when they were very young he brought his concerns down to their level. He was never one to bear a lonely burden, or to keep his affairs to himself, and naturally the first to share the things that were on his heart were his own children. His paramount concern for his wife's health they well knew. An oft-repeated plea in all his letters is the following, addressed to a still very small son: "Let me hear good news of your mother. Make her very happy, and remember, *she is mine*; you must take care of her for me till I come." Once or twice, when her health gave him cause for anxiety, he gathered his children and confided his fears to them, and asked them to pray with him. Their child prayers strengthened him. In his later life he saw his lifelong petitions for his wife abundantly granted.

"I am proud that the dear Lord has asked me to make so great a sacrifice," he once wrote to his children, referring to a separation. It was in this spirit that he accepted these very real hardships. He regarded them therefore as a privilege, and also as a discipline. He realized a sense of loss in missing the unfolding experiences of his children, and being unable to join in the great occasions of their lives, or to share in all their new

beginnings. In a letter to a daughter on her birthday, he writes: "All through the morning I have been thinking of you. There'll be all kinds of nice things at Boscombe today, I know, and high-jinks tonight. I would like to be amongst it all, but the Lord knew that when He sent me about my business, which is His business."

Although he felt deprived of much that would have enthralled him, it was herein that he found his courage: "We must ever be willing to enjoy loss for His sake. The song at midnight in the Philippian gaol came from this spirit. We all need hardening and bracing. Discipline is good for us, but seldom pleasant. I do hope it may be a means of grace to me—this long parting which is almost like the amputation of a limb, or the cutting out of a vital organ." He discovered that apparent loss for Christ's sake is great gain, and deeply he learned the secret of an abiding, independent joy. Looking back upon a journey, that took him away from his loved ones for three years, he wrote: "When I came out of the Golden Gate, leaving you all behind, the impression I retain of that experience, although I heave a deep sigh when I look back, is that the Lord was very near to give His own deep joy just when it was sorely needed."

Prayer was his compensation. By its means he followed the affairs of his children closely, and partook in all the milestones of their lives. "I'll pray for you, and you pray for me," he wrote to a son entering upon his first term at a public school, "that we may both be like Jesus in everything. Clean through and through, and like pure crystal because the Holy Spirit always lives in our hearts." Again, anxiously enquiring after the results of an examination—there may be spiritual results to these as well—"How did you get on? Did you find the whole difficulties vanish like a morning mist before the sun? I don't think we should expect prayer to give us a knowledge of algebra, but it should—and I am sure did—refresh and calm and support you." He followed all such occasions to the very hour, though when he was in an opposite hemisphere these usually occurred in the middle of a night. "I always woke up once or

twice during the nights, and while you boys were at your work I bore you up to our dear Lord in prayer." This time it was Varsity examinations that he was following from afar.

Prayer, with Abel, was not so much a special religious exercise as a momentary habit, as natural as breathing. "An uplifted heart supplied my need," was his comment upon many an ordeal that had faced him. Writing to a daughter, who had a list of commissions to fulfil for the Mission, it was perfectly normal for him to advise: "have done so much stampeding up and down doing my business that I think if the thing is taken in order much unnecessary fag might be avoided. A special prayer before you set out upon your errands will greatly facilitate matters." Obviously he found it so.

"The only way to make God give us ours is to give it away," Abel used to say. Naturally he had a great deal of advice for his children, and this was invariably a sharing of his own experience. He was chary of anything second-hand. "Be a good soldier," he wrote to one; "always be prepared to make any sacrifice for Christ's sake." And to another: "If you are going to give your life to the Lord, earthly rewards are never coming your way. I should like you to glory in this fact."

These and similar injunctions, that were verbal expressions of his own experience, often sprinkle his letters to his children; terse phrases and quips that came not only from his lips, but from his life. "We mustn't be half-and-halfers; we must be out-and-outers," was one; and the following tested prescription, "Pray much, lean hard, and act from day to day, from hour to hour, as you are led. He never fails;" or his familiar injunction: "Keep the prayer fires burning."

Although Abel instilled his thoughts and ideals into the minds of his own children, as well as into his larger family of Papuan boys and girls, he never attempted to force them into accepting his views. He knew that inherited beliefs, as such, are valueless, and he was particularly guarded in his respect for the preserves of their own minds. He encouraged their own independent thinking with a boldness often lacking in those of his Scriptural views on life. "Ponder these things yourself," he

urges in a letter to one. "Don't slither into confusion like an inebriate into a bog."

"Get your life from Christ," he wrote again, "and His Word; don't copy anybody's phrases. We want to *witness* in our *lives*. We must be careful that our witness is the outcome of something very real, which we can only get by a close and continuous contact with Christ." To two of his children, who had attended the Keswick Convention, he wrote: "It's a fearful responsibility for you both. We must all be generators, not merely receivers. We must each be a centre of spiritual force, but we can't create our own power. We must get it before we can give it."

Of well-worn religious phrases or, as he termed it, "using expressions which may more than describe my own experiences," he was always shy.

I have a dread of saying more than I feel. I have a shrinking from pious expressions like "it was laid upon me." Even the term "quiet time" seems to me to be someone else's. . . . I pray that God will so form Christ in me that I shall express Him in thought, and word, and deed, through just the life He would have me live.

Much of the father's advice to his children reveals his own outlook, and gives the clue to his own success in life. "Concentration," was his great enjoinder upon his schoolboy sons. "Get the habit of concentrating your mind on the subject on hand, and not suffering an alien thought to intrude." So often was this reiterated that it became quite unnecessary to write the word. A frequent conclusion to his letters to his boys at one time was: "Fight the good fight, and don't forget my watchword: Con——." As the whole of his work plainly shows, it was his own habit and tested experience that he was handing on. This was largely what Kwato stood for: intensive training, the raising of a new, progressive nucleus to set the lead in their country, concentration on a comparatively small handful for the ultimate good of the whole country.

The children knew well enough that the sentiments their



father expressed in his letters were not put on for their special benefit. For Abel was literally frightened of insincerity, and would err on the side of reticence rather than make a remark that might appear unctuous, or pretentious, or in any way abnormal. When he wrote to his sons at Cambridge: "Have a royal time together. Begin at the Throne of Grace. Let us honour God in everything we do, and then we are free to use all the good things He gives us," he was merely telling them to do as they would do at home, and not to live a life unnatural to their normal life at Kwato, where their day began with prayer, and centred round God.

Abel was not unaware of the subtlety of intellectual pitfalls, nor was he afraid of sounding the warning note: this he does to a son who was studying anthropology:

Most anthropologists seem to be men without any spiritual vision. I expect you will hear a lot of things on this subject which would make our precious faith look foolish. . . . "Hold fast to that which is good." If you keep near to Christ you will see too plainly how chartless a life is theirs who only see with their eyes, and only believe the things which they can handle.

Abel was outstandingly human, and therefore views which he held, which are regarded as narrow by the world at large, did not cut him off from his fellow men. He had many friends in every department of life, and loved many with whom he differed widely. That others did not share his view, or even his loyalties, did not put them beyond the pale of his interest or his affections. "Deeds, not words, was his motto, and he was essentially a man's man," testified his friend James B. Nicholson, of Sydney. Abel liked his fellow men for what they were as human beings, and not necessarily for what they had attained, either spiritually or materially. This made him an enigma to smaller men. It also made him friend to all he met. His God-given "gift for friendship," to which so many of his friends of all shades of belief and unbelief have witnessed, was

a means of blessing to his fellows, and was part of a personality consecrated to God and to man.

His sociability extended to his spiritual life. One who enjoyed the fellowship of men as he did, enjoyed above all his fellowship with the Father. One who passed all good things on to his friends, naturally shared his own experience with Christ, and this sharing sums up much of his Christian activity. He shared his humour and his pleasures, as well as spiritual blessings. There were no divisions in his life. Men loved him for his companionship, his sympathy, the consistency with which he showed his colours as a Christian, whether or not those around him bowed to the truths he lived to proclaim. They loved him also for the mirth he caused, and for his unforgettable and amusing stories.

One typical and well-remembered tale that Abel used to tell with relish concerned his efforts to play the host to a boat's crew of Papuans who had arrived in Sydney while he was there on furlough. Finding them utterly unadjusted, and feeling lost and strange in the midst of new and bewildering surroundings of civilization, he had promised to take them out one Saturday afternoon. Papuans being expert in the water, he decided upon a swimming carnival as the thing that would impress them most. On the appointed day Abel presented himself at the dock where their ship lay berthed, to find that the whole crew, having been paid their wages, had raided inferior second-hand clothing shops in the vicinity of the waterfront. There they stood in a line, awaiting their escort, arrayed in every variety and combination of garb, from knickerbockers fastened at the ankles, and bare feet, to bright-coloured football jerseys worn with a swallow-tail coat. Nothing daunted, Abel set off through the streets of Sydney with this menagerie in a long queue behind him, and a gathering crowd of onlookers following them and cheering. Abel and his party were one of the chief attractions at the carnival.

Another story related to a telephone conversation with what Abel supposed was a dairy farm. The subject was the purchase of a cow, but the exchange had connected him with a garage.

"You want a car, did you say?"

"Yes, a cow."

The conversation continued along extraordinary avenues without either party discovering the mistake. The sales manager of the garage offered a runabout. Abel said he did not mind, so long as it would stand still and be milked.

"Do *what*?"

"Be milked!" The salesman could not catch that. A much-repeated and carefully articulated enquiry as to whether the "car" in question was in milk, and when she had last calved, finally illumined the mystery.

Abel liked to think well of his fellow men, and it took a lot to make him think otherwise. Misunderstandings oppressed him. "I shall open my heart to God," he once wrote, "and pray myself into a glowing frame of soul which will *laugh* at the wrong judgments of my fellow man." On one or two occasions he met with sheer guile in others and was at a complete loss to explain what his whole soul recoiled from recognizing. Friction he could not abide, and more than once had cause to regret a course he had taken for the sake of peace and quietness. When he felt that he had offended, he was quick to make amends. The following letter to a fellow-missionary, whom he had unwittingly wounded, reveals his contrition:

If sorrow of heart could atone for my careless word, my account would be settled. I have gone to our Master, and on my knees have asked Him to forgive me, and I am sure I shall not appeal to you in vain to forgive and forget the thoughtless jest.

The letter ends with a compact of mutual remembrance in prayer each Saturday morning; in this way what might have been a cause of dissension became a source of blessing.

Abel's Christian witness was closely bound up with the geniality that he radiated. For religion was not merely his background, but his whole life, and imperatively his natural life. Against anything unnatural, in religion as in life, he was full of misgiving.

I am fearfully frightened of cranks (he once wrote). We can't go wrong if we pray, and study God's word, and ask sincerely to have Christ formed in us. Then the Holy Spirit will transform our lives. Let us be careful not to imitate other men's methods unless we are certain they are God's methods for us; and careful not to adopt other people's phraseology; we are such parrots. We want to be the men and women Christ wants us to be. If we aim at, and pray for that, we shall avoid pitfalls.

He wrote to his wife:

I suspect emotions and, like you, I hate the expression of something not wholly real. There are such a lot of freaks about. We are called to a "sound mind." Let us love Jesus with all our hearts, and follow Him every step of the way remaining to us, and get to know Him so as to adore Him; but I pray we may be kept as sane as Paul was.

In his own spiritual life he was not only humble, but was unduly conscious of his failings. He criticized himself unsparingly, and was most ready to confess his faults. He who saw so much good in others would acknowledge but little in himself. Despondingly he wrote, after special trial:

God's mercy finds me among the faithful. I have no reserve in times of testing, whereas faith is in its element the greater test. . . . I can be calm under personal sickness and even pain, but I imagine the calm is more the result of resignation than faith. If those dearest to me are touched, by real or expected calamity, I am undone. Indeed my imagination often conjures up calamity where my loved ones are concerned, where the possibility of disaster is remote.

And again, at a time of retrospection and self-examination, he confesses:

I find myself planning, plotting and arranging, which shows I do not leave the "ordering" to the Lord (Psalm 27:33). This does not mean that I manage my mission without prayer and without faith, but it does mean, perhaps, that self is having

very much more to say than it should have; that I am General Manager when I ought to be a most humble and obedient servant. I lay awake last night and tried to review my year's work. A big expenditure of what might be called *sweat*, but such a lack of power. So much graft, so little Grace. Any amount of work, but much of it will not stand the fiery test. I can only hope in the infinite mercy of God. He has been faithful when I have been faithless: He has blessed where I deserve no blessing. Otherwise my work will largely go to the fire stack (Cor. 3:13). It is largely a question of roots. The tree planted by the rivers of water has its hidden life permanently in the secret springs.

In spite of such confessions Abel was possessed of a vital faith. The testings that life provided, the times when he had been cast upon God, and the victories of past years, had securely fixed his trust in God. This faith was hard won. He had proved for himself that it is better to trust in God, against all appearances, and in the midst of defeat. "It must be faith, and not resignation," he once wrote, when evidences were against him. "We want faith that carries us beyond the seen things, the things that make for anxiety." He had triumphed over much anxiety.

Charles Abel was essentially a Bible Christian. The God whom a life of conflict and trial, as well as of great joy, had brought ever closer into his experience was the Word made Flesh. And the Bible, throughout the years, had become more than a retreat for solace or refreshment; it was his daily guide. The success of each day depended upon his early communion with God, through the means of prayer and the pages of his Bible. "Laying the day's foundations," as he called it. "I am proving it is the lubrication of our machinery," he said, referring to the time set aside for the early Morning Watch, and its effect on the running of the Mission.

Although there were extremes of belief that had little meaning for him—even a literal hell of flames he did not profess to accept as more than figurative description, ("If these are literal flames, then we Christians must be literal salt!" he

opined.)—yet as an Evangelical he was dogmatic. Writing to a son in the critical atmosphere of a Cambridge theological college, he expressed his views with no uncertainty:

There are things in God's Word you will not be able to understand, but they will all be made clear to our imperfect vision some day. But these are nothing compared to the confusion and contradiction into which man's wisdom will lead you. Our limitations are so easily reached by the cleverest men we know that we must despair if we are to try to arrive at the Truth intellectually. We fail to comprehend earthly things; how are we to understand heavenly things? You must show that the stand you take is not merely a matter of accepting or rejecting a theory, but that it is the source of a holy and powerful Christian life. When a man is converted he soon bundles all his wisdom overboard as an encumbrance and impertinence, and finds himself simply and humbly, and gratefully, and joyfully trusting in Christ. A prayerful spirit, a cleansed heart, a wholly surrendered life, will dispense with human props, however wonderful they look, and will receive the direct enlightenment of the Holy Spirit Himself.

Abel's theology was ethical. He knew Whom he had believed, and this vital and experimental knowledge was expressed in the life he lived. With his usual clear-sightedness he picked upon essentials in his presentation of the Gospel to Papuans. Of his aims in his spiritual work in Papua he wrote: "Our Gospel has to be something which will help the indentured labourer to live near to God. For this we need to emphasize essentials, and to make our teaching definite, clear and simple."

"Abel was, above all things, a Christian evangelist," wrote his friend, Mr. Arthur Porritt, the editor of *The Christian World*, "but to him evangelism had a wide place for work, sport and fun. He was a great-heart, grave and humourous by turns, a man to whom nothing human was alien. My last glimpse of him was a farewell wave of the hand as he left me at Waterloo Station to see a boat-race at Barnes."

This combination of "grave and gay," that had been in evidence in his college days, remained with him throughout his



life. An extract from a letter written when he was sixty-four speaks eloquently of this freedom from compartments in his outlook, as well as of his zest in life: "Thank God I am fit and well again. Tip-top. I would challenge any man I know ten years my junior to a hundred yards' flat race today. Just off to the noon prayer-meeting."

First and foremost an evangelist, he was not a mass worker, bringing revival to multitudes, but rather a personal worker, tireless at the forefront of the battle which was for him a hand-to-hand affair. Wherever they might be he sought out his men, whether it was in countless long talks with Papuans, or in calling on his white neighbours, enjoying the open hospitality of a distant part of the world still untrammelled by convention, praying with them, and passing on his way.

He trekked up to some goldfields once to visit some miners who had grudges against him. He had already faced a levelled revolver from one of their number, and had no cause to believe they would not resent his coming. But he went and talked to them all, separately and collectively. He tried to make friends with them. Finally they softened towards him and, having quieted the implacable one with liberal doses of whiskey and rolled him onto his bunk, they sat round a table while Abel laid the claims of Christ before them and prayed and prayed with them. Every time the objector emerged from his stupor and began to raise a vociferous outcry one of his companions would shut him up effectively with another swig from the bottle, sending him back into the mists for the time being.

"God does not comfort us to make us comfortable, but to make us comforters," said the late Dr. J. H. Jowett. This was certainly the case with Abel. He could give to those in need the fruit of his own trials, and there were many whose loads he was able to lighten because he himself knew the One who lifts burdens, and the triumph He makes possible in human hearts. To one in trouble he wrote:

I shall continue to pray for you until, please God, I may have the joy of seeing you with an unburdened mind and a

light heart. The Lord delights to be fully trusted, and He is giving you an opportunity of showing your trust in Him. In the dark experiences in my own life He has never failed me.

Abel saw a lot of good in the human spirit, which was natural to a man of his sociability. Perhaps he only looked for good in his fellows. The result was that he had a great tolerance for others and a reluctance to careless criticism, sometimes rare in those of his hard and fast views. When a friend asked his opinion as to whether a certain weaker brother was really saved, all he could bring himself to say rather wistfully was: "I am very much afraid he will only be a bottle-washer when he gets to Heaven."

Predominating in Abel's life was his love for the Papuan people. To them he gave his life. All his struggles had been on their behalf. "Remember, they are ever nearer to God's heart than they are to ours," he wrote to his wife at a time when the continuance of the special work was threatened. With all their failings, and Abel had been too hampered by them in his life to be blind to them, he came to admire these simple people more and more, and loved them greatly, even the weakest of them. Referring to a community where human frailty was the only thing to be depended upon, it was characteristic of him to write: "If you want to fall amongst kind friends, get shipwrecked some dirty night off Gulitau, and take shelter in the old house at Gwaiabatarina. I've been there without being shipwrecked, and they *act* like Christians, so pleased to see you, and to have you to talk to and to hear your news."

His own concern for them helped him to appreciate God's love for them, which he knew must be greater than his human devotion. This thought often guided his prayers. He was a shepherd, to whom the affairs of each one of his flock were of heart concern. After a brave public confession on the part of a Papuan backslider whose failure had inflicted loss upon the Papuan Church, Abel wrote: "Yes, when I remember how often this has been the bitter way back to God's favour, I think I love my people more because I have gone down to them in

these dark experiences, and shared their pain and also their joy in finding Christ again, than I do because of their splendid loyalty and affection."

Of the latter there could be no question. There had been many outstanding occasions throughout Abel's life when the devotion of his people had been specially demonstrated. Of these the incident that moved him most was one that occurred earlier in his life in Papua. His wife had been looking exhausted after a long period of ill-health. The senior men and women at Kwato begged him to send her away to her own country to get well. Abel took them into his confidence and explained the many difficulties that stood in the way, not the least of which was the considerable expense that such a course would involve. That night they reappeared with their bank-books, representing all their savings—for Mrs. Abel had sedulously taught them to save from whatever money they earned—and one and all they pleaded: "Take this; the money is yours. Take Sinabada away until she is well, for our sakes." Happily it did not prove to be necessary for her to go, but the generous love of their Papuan friends touched them deeply. This simple and sincere affection of their people was an abundant recompense for their work in Papua.

## XVIII

### THE JOURNEY'S END

**T**HE last years of Abel's life were harvest-years. "Never have I felt the Church so thirsty for the things of God. Truly we may say the best is yet to come," he wrote when he arrived back home from the long absence in England and America, glad enough, as he said, "to feel that I could drop my anchor at last." With the backing of the new mission organization behind him, he was longing to be at grips again with his real task. He plunged into his work, full of plans that he was eager to carry out, and with new hopes that he longed to see fulfilled.

He was accorded a wonderful Papuan welcome, with the usual escort of long dugout canoes, conch-shell blasts, and chains of bonfires at night. The tasks that he took up seemed like luxury after his long absence, and he gloried in the renewed opportunities for working, with greater promise than ever, for the welfare of Papua. It seemed almost too good to be true. "I must make the most of these days," he wrote; "they are God-given and they must be given to God." To crown his joy he found his people keen to push forward, and ready to help in every way. "Saevaru reports absolute unanimity, and a keen desire to do something really big to help," records his journal. The prevailing sentiment at Kwato impelled him to exclaim:

I appreciate these clever, willing people as never before. The place is a hive of industry. Willing hands and happy faces everywhere. They are simply magnificent at their work, and they work splendidly together. Good, efficient service rendered with real affection; a luxury indeed in these times. Much there is for which to thank God, first because it is the fruit of the Spirit in the lives of these dear faithful children, and then because it is a vindication of our much discussed methods. It

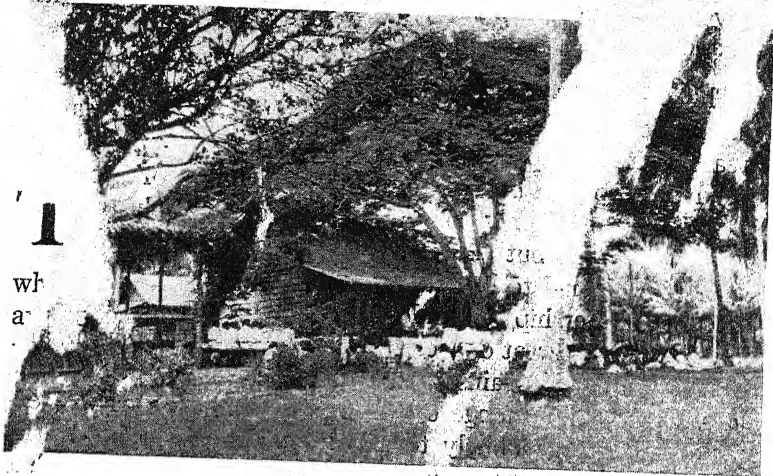
## CHARLES W. ABEL OF KWATO

... t that you can only get good results from faith and adequate teaching.

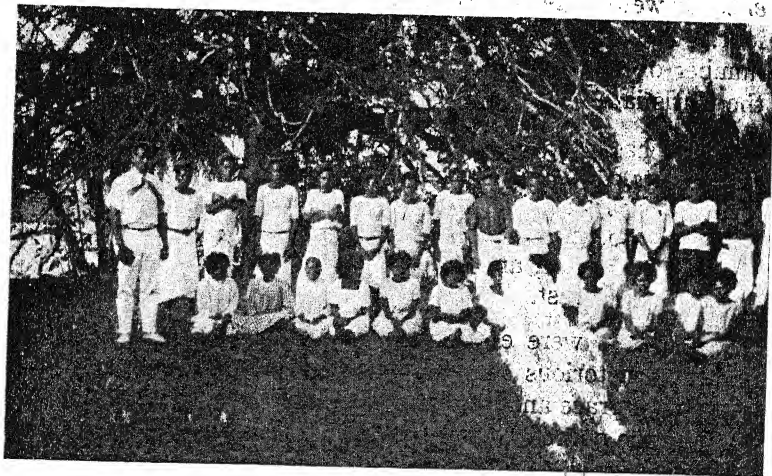
... he e ... work at the head-station, the many claim  
th listri ... ne out-stations, personal interviews th  
c. ... ed w. ... iritual awakening in the Church, all  
bine to keep ... busier than ever. His ideal of the  
intensive work ... ot only carried out on the indust  
educational sid ... extended equally to the spiritu  
Each convert l ... o be taught, and the standard of  
Church members. ... demanded was high. Abel wrote  
time: "There is great danger in a big and popular Church  
we need to guard against it." Each convert had not only t  
show a very real change of life before baptism, but was ex  
pected to testify publicly to a personal experience of Christ  
and what this experience amounted to in his daily life. This  
is no small test of a people as naturally undemonstrative and  
chary of publicity as Papuans. It was a safeguard against a  
cheap and easy belief, and insured that those who joined the  
... klesia were truly converted and able to witness to their Sav  
our. The power in the Papuan Church was evident in the  
... of new converts won each year, through the work of  
... Christians in each centre.

There has been a stirring among the dry bones in two or  
three parts of the district. There are literally scores of names  
I have on paper, given to me by one and another, a few here  
and a few there, and each one tells of a soul sick and tired of  
the devil's service and longing for the peace which can only  
be found in Christ.

Great joys have been experienced in these years by the whole  
Church; victorious occasions to be remembered for the out  
pouring of grace and power. "We had a most glorious service,  
and the sun poured into the church, and everything was as glad  
outside as we were within,"—is the brief comment at the end of  
a day that saw many Papuans publicly take their stand for  
Christ, and which expresses something of the atmosphere of  
harvest.



A COMMUNION SERVICE AT KOEABULE.



MAKURA AND CONVERTS GATHERED FROM LAMHAGA.

RESULTS OF EVANGELISM IN PAPUA



MI 100

SP 100

SP 100

SP 100

SP 100

SP 100

There was still great need for a better staffing of the Mission. Responsibilities increased. There was only the faithful ally Miss Parkin—"gentle when I am cross, faithful when I am shaky, and behaves herself generally like a gentleman," Abel wrote of her. Eventually reinforcements began to arrive, and at last Abel was to have the immense satisfaction of seeing a proper chance given to many cherished ventures. There was the joy of his wife's return to the work, and, in time, the enlistment of all four children. "Sail away, proud ship!" he wrote, having watched the steamer, that was to bring Mrs. Abel back, pass down the Straits. "You will never have a loftier mission than the one you are now engaged in. You may well look so fine and eager!"

A happy phase was the re-entrance into the work of F. W. Walker, who came to take charge of the accountancy. At Kwato once more, the two old colleagues enjoyed the renewal of the fellowship of bygone years. They talked over the aims of the work, and their plans for the future, not one whit less enthusiastically than they had talked thirty-five years earlier in a trader's humpy on the Kwato beach. But this happy year proved to be Walker's last. When he learned, after a short illness, that the end was certain, he put his house in order, and said "good-bye" to his friends without a regret. As ever, he was looking ahead, and this time with keen anticipation at the prospect of meeting his Master. Thus he embarked on his last great adventure, triumphantly, and with all the excitement and courage he had always displayed in the adventuresome life in which his Lord had called him.

The need for a better organized medical branch to the work was again brought to the fore. Abel's first recorded prayer for a hospital at Kwato occurred as far back as 1904. In keeping with the principles of work at Kwato, the most important part of this proposed venture was to be the training of a Papuan medical missionary service. On his way back from England in 1918 his steamer had called at Pagopago, the American port in Samoa, and he had been greatly impressed by seeing a party of Samoan nurses going about their work in

an efficient and business-like manner. They had been trained under the Government, and Abel's imagination was fired by the sight of these uniformed women who were capably serving their own people, especially the women and children, in the Christ-like service of healing. The large amount of unprofessional medical work that went on at all times at Kwato, and in the district, made the fulfilment of this vision more and more a necessity. "Have decided to have a hospital at once," reads the journal. "If they sack me for being out of order, I shall pass out in a good cause!" These plans were supported by the Government medical officer at Samarai, Dr. Giblin, and were encouraged by the Government authorities at Port Moresby. They recognized that the Mission, with its influence honeycombing native life, had exceptional opportunities of reaching the people with this service, especially the women and children. This need was laid before all friends of Kwato, and there was an immediate response. The members of the American Committee who undertook to fulfil this vision were soon able to send word that the necessary funds for a hospital had been found.

"No man ever felt more than I do today that my daily tasks are fully shared by my supporters," Abel wrote. His work was followed closely by his new friends. "There was a most inspiring mail from America," the journal records, "every letter breathing earnestness of purpose, and deep affection." To one who warmed quickly to human sympathy, this genuine interest, and the sense of his friends' prayers, bore him up. "There is a real prayer-link between your homes and ours which can only bring God's blessing to us all," he wrote to the Montclair group.

In spite of these encouragements, however, and the evident progress there was on the field, Abel was not without his anxieties. The items recorded for special prayer began to centre more and more around "some of the difficulties that stand so threateningly in our pathway." He had had his misgivings as to the smoothness of the course ahead when he had set out to return to Papua. As the end of the ten years probationary period drew near, there was a drawn-out discussion with the L. M. S. over the permanence of the Mission. Abel could not

believe that he had been commissioned to build to no purpose. In his view the success of his venture at Kwato was the earnest of its continuance, and only a failure in his stewardship could have necessitated a conclusion to his work at the end of the Kwato Association lease. Abel felt that there were cross currents at work that he was too far away to combat and found himself launched into an endless correspondence. He faced considerable uncertainty that was in strange contrast to the joys and triumphs that were quietly sweeping through the Christian community in his district. But his faith had been well seasoned and he wrote: "If we are faithful and prayerful, nothing can thwart the Lord's will. Things are going well. We are growing in the best sense. The current is beneath the surface, unaffected by an occasional tempestuous sea. Without faith I should grow old prematurely."

The blessing that was upon his work was calling him on. But those who sponsored his affairs were being perplexed with questions as to the future of the Mission, fast approaching the end of its mandate. So long as the continuance of Kwato was in doubt there could be no important steps taken. Funds for new buildings were held up, and the appointment of new helpers was postponed. But in spite of this the work went on. Abel's letters express his own amazement at the way the Mission was provided for. "Wonderful! When does the Lord say us nay?" he wrote when all needs had been met up to the end of a year.

He just tests our faith and then opens His gracious hand wide. Haven't we amazed you a dozen times with what we have done this past twelve months? We should glory in setbacks which are only sent to try our faith. How much better we should honour Him if in the darkness we trusted more implicitly, and if we always realized that when He keeps us waiting He is working for our good. When He breaks up our little schemes it is always to improve our plans. We can only see to the end of our noses. Let us praise Him for everything and never be faithless again.

When a phenomenal yam harvest had saved the situation for them by a three-months' extra supply of food at a great reduction of expense, he wrote: "So the Lord provides. It is all wonderful. I have been pondering that word lately. (Luke 18:1) 'Don't faint, *pray!*' How confidently we can trust in the Lord."

"If a timid person is afraid, the dinghy will turn over; the best way to reassure him is for someone to jump on the gun-'ale." Abel wrote, as he boldly launched forth. He felt that he could not afford to mark time, or at his time of life to let the years slip past. All the Christian backing that his labours, his tears before God, and his prayers had secured was in abeyance pending the renewal or otherwise of the ten-year charter.

"There is plenty of room for faith," he said, and, taking advantage of an opportunity to show his confidence in the future, he joyfully planned and supervised the rebuilding of his technical branch, the provision for adequate accommodation for increased industrial opportunities, and the re-establishment of the sawmill with a new plant.

On the day that Boru died, a day of natural sorrow at the passing of a faithful friend of over thirty years, a particularly depressing mail arrived that brought no sign of any settlement of difficulties. Late on that boisterous and rainy night a long cortege of hurricane lamps had wound its way over the hills to the cemetery. On returning from the funeral and pondering over affairs, Abel wrote to his two sons in England:

We must try and realize the romance of faith. The glorious uncertainty of not knowing what the Lord is going to do next, and yet do the very best according to His promise. "I don't care," is condemned by the wisdom of this world. It is commended in the Book as the proper Christian attitude. I am afraid our letters tonight will leave you rather depressed. Cheer up. The Lord reigneth. Ask Boru!

Abel took his senior men and women into his confidence and laid all his affairs before them. "They must know that we are up against it," he said. He was relying upon their prayers and

upon the solid work that was being done at each station at the daily noon-prayer meetings. The financial record of this period in the history of the Mission, a remarkable story of Providence, was perhaps the most reassuring part of the work. Sailing close-hauled to the wind, nevertheless all emergencies were met unfailingly. "Even if the Lord appears to keep us waiting, He is always punctual," Abel wrote. And when funds were withheld he says, "Forging ahead without them; that is how the Lord answers our faith." He could have no fears for the future with the provision of the present so evident.

The climax of all this uncertainty was reached one day when a cable came to hand from his committee in England intimating the probable necessity of returning the Kwato field to the L. M. S. in view of the Mission's inability to meet certain large financial obligations. Abel, however, remembered the way he had come. "God can, and will, overrule all for our good," he wrote. He had become quite impervious to shocks. The money was provided, and the episode merely served to confirm, once more, his belief that the work was being directed by God, and that its future, therefore, was secure.

No amount of opposition or want of sympathy can be allowed to interfere with this work finally. It has to go, and it has to grow. . . . We need to keep very near to Christ, not in order to win a fight, or score a point, or have our own way, but to *know* His mind, and to do His will whatever it costs us. . . . The battle is the Lord's.

The day came at last when the L. M. S., overriding many considerations, agreed to sell out the whole venture to the Kwato Association. When the preliminary legalities were fulfilled, quite unexpectedly two cables came to Abel's hand. One was from England, bearing the two simple but pregnant words, "Contract signed," and the other from New York intimating that the funds for the building of the hospital, now released, were already on their way. Thus ended five years of uncertainty.

There was a public rejoicing in Kwato on that memorable



day; a thanksgiving, and a singing of the doxology. Abel went for a long walk to pray and to try to realize the whole change of outlook. He looked around with new eyes upon the chosen sites of various projects that were now to become an actual fact. There was a jubilant demonstration of bonfires along the beach that night. "What a burden of uncertainty has been lifted off our minds," he wrote. "Today seems like the dawn after a severe hurricane when the clouds have lifted, and the sun appears and the seas compose themselves."

The year 1927 passed—a year which Abel called the *annus mirabilis* of the Mission. He listed the strides that had been made, and the benefits that had been received, for thanksgiving. These included the spiritual harvest, the results of systematic itineraries with his wife, and the entrance of new helpers into the work. There were also material improvements such as the donation of an electric lighting plant at Kwato, the gift of Papuans and an evidence of their increased sense of responsibility. It included also the laying of plans for a new and more commodious motor boat to replace the overtaxed *Mamari*.

Abel lived to see such fruits of his labours and his prayers as it is given to few to see in their lifetime. He lived to see the major share of his responsibility placed upon the shoulders of Papuans; who were suitably educated and who had the spiritual vision to be of real service to their fellows. This was part of his reward, of which the crown was the realization that he had given his own children to the work. Never had he, by word or suggestion, tried to influence them to return to Papua. He had, however, instilled his ideals of service into them as they grew, and had sought always to influence them Godward. He had always visualized the future with his children scattered over the face of the earth.

The embodiment of all Charles Abel's thoughts and hopes for the Papuan, as well as the fulfilment of his prayers, was Kwato. Here the opinions and methods evolved from a life's experience were inculcated. Early in his life he had had great vision for the primitive people to whom he had come. They were sensual, superstitious and cruel. They were hidebound in their beliefs

and customs, all of which were cemented with primitive witchcraft and sorcery, and inseparably allied to the spirits. Now he said, "I thank God I am as keen to continue here as I was keen to begin forty years ago. I know the poverty of the material we have to work upon. I remember the awful pit from which they have to be digged. But we have seen what the Lord can do for these sensual people."

"The Holy Spirit is at work, and there is indeed no limit to His power in men's lives"—that was the ground upon which he had built up his hopes, and from which his vision had grown. He had gone ahead confidently, and at first against all apparent possibility of success. At the end of his life he was able to say, what few could say with equal conviction, that had he his life to live again he would follow the same methods of work he had pursued so doggedly throughout those forty years. In contemplating extension into unevangelized territory, he wrote:

The first thing I would do would be to beg, borrow or steal as many babies as possible and bring them up absolutely away from their village life. This would cause a great outcry. Theoretically it is the wrong thing to do: practically there is nothing else so well worth doing. While we are dealing with the three hundred we will do all that another mission would do for the masses, but our hope for the future would be in the new start we would give to those whose minds are not saturated with filth and heathenism from the day they can think for themselves.

Abel's own verdict upon the summary of his life's experience and work was: "One long record of miracles." Looking back was always a solemnizing experience with him.

How humble I feel when I look back. What a lesson we should all learn, even from the past four years. Every step of the way His dear hand can be seen now. Did we always feel certain it was upholding us when we could not see it? When things look darkest He is making things work together for our good.

How true we have proved it to be, that if we acknowledge

Him He will direct our paths. When has He failed us? We can say with Joshua, "Not one thing hath failed." May our trust be complete in such a Master.

There were no thoughts of laying down his tools. Abel was looking ahead as enthusiastically as ever, and the great and growing burden on his soul was the unevangelized areas of Papua. An offer of property belonging to the Papuan Industries at the mouth of the great Fly River, and the possibility of beginning all over again began to fill his whole horizon.

The completion of the transfer of the Kwato properties from the L. M. S. gave the Association its independence, "due to the magnanimity of the London Missionary Society," Abel wrote, "who had good reasons for wishing to retain this portion of the coast under their immediate control, but who nevertheless were prepared to give this experiment every chance of proving itself." There was need for a reorganization of the Home bases and their preparation for future work. The American Council cabled to him to come at once. Abel had to brace himself to take this step, and he set off reluctantly in the latter part of 1929. He was turning his back upon his work which had become more and more absorbing. But he was leaving it better manned than it had ever been, and he had begun to have the joy of seeing his famous injunction, "Thorough!" come into its own in various departments of his work that had hitherto lacked adequate supervision. He planned to complete his work in America and England, where Mrs. Abel was to join him. That rest time was to be spent in retirement, in prayer and self-preparation for the future and the extension to which he believed God was calling him. "Somewhere on the Thames," was to see the beginning of the new work, whose foundations they were going to lay together in prayer. The vicinity of "Pangbourne, Streatly and Goring," places he dearly loved, was chosen for this big preparation.

On the long journey to America Abel found many opportunities for service and enjoyed the companionship of his fellow passengers. He made himself beloved by his ministrations to

an invalid on the ship, of whom he took entire charge. He also sought to share the rich treasure of his faith with members of a theatrical party, whom he liked for the kindness proverbial of their fraternity, but who were as ignorant of the Gospel as any of his raw Papuans—and as hungry.

America once more brought renewal of fellowship with those who had more than proved their faithfulness in their participation in the Mission. Hours were spent in conference over the future management and extension of the work that was now permanent. There followed four months of hard going, speaking in various cities, with a full itinerary prepared for him. "I am in the thick of it," he wrote. "Two months and two days from Kwato, and here am I in the U. S. A., right up to my neck in meetings." He experienced a freedom from care in his exacting work, which he attributed to the unceasing prayers of Papuan Christians who were upholding him. "Give them all my love, and tell them to keep the prayer-fires burning," was the word he sent home. In the midst of the racket of his work he found himself yearning for Kwato.

Your life out there looks so quiet and happy from this standpoint. Really "the lines are fallen unto us in pleasant places." How I would love to see the Logea folk gliding slowly over to service in their canoes, and to unite with our simple people in worship. How I would love to peep across the Bay to dear old Duabo. "Give me to drink of the waters of Bethlehem."

To Miss Parkin at Koeabule, he wrote:

Your letter was very interesting. I can see the church decorated with palms and tropical flowers, and the dear old faces of our K. B. friends: mighty different they seem sometimes, when you are close up to them and trying to drive them forward, as well as lead them upward, but from this distance I'd like to kind of kiss them all round. A metaphorical kiss is quite hygienic and need cause no scandal. Give them my love and tell them I think and pray for them constantly. Tell them the best surprise for me when I return will be for me to find their

hearts are like a beautiful garden, kept clean and free from the weeds of sin, and made lovely by the work of the Holy Spirit.

Abel found relaxation from his labours and great pleasure within the circle of friends at Montclair. Mr. Walter McDougall, the Treasurer of the Association, in whose home Abel largely made his headquarters, recalls: "Often I have seen him return to our home after a speaking trip, fagged out, but a cup of tea, a chat and a prayer together, never failed to cheer him and bring the spiritual nourishment he required in large measure for the responsibilities and burdens he carried in fellowship with his Master. Every day he lived in fellowship with his Lord, and if pressure of work and engagements left him short of prayer time he would say, 'Come, let us have a time of prayer, I'm *starved*.'"

Many lives were touched in the course of his itinerary. Perhaps his greatest work this time was amongst unbelievers. "He seemed to have the element of humanity so mingled with his genuine piety that all were attracted to him," wrote Dr. John Timothy Stone, the President of the Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Chicago. "Those who were not ordinarily in sympathy were won immediately. His story read like a romance. The Kingdom of Heaven here on earth has been made more vital and real to us all." Abel's message was primarily evangelistic, for he enjoyed appealing on behalf of his Master and testifying out of a full heart to His faithfulness. In this type of address he would let himself go, without preparation or forethought. The last public address he ever gave was delivered in Brooklyn, and is remembered gratefully by one unsympathetic member of the audience who had long trodden a wayward path, but who found himself at the feet of Christ that night.

It was a very tired man that boarded the Red Star liner for England in March of 1930. "America has sent me on my way rejoicing. I realize that I am wealthy in the affection of God's people," he wrote, looking back on his recent experiences. "There is only one story to tell from first to last, of the splendid welcome everywhere I went, and of patient, sympathetic

hearing of my message. I look back with inexpressible gratitude to all those inspiring good times."

"A howling gale on the Atlantic in March isn't exactly ideal travelling," was his summary of the week of mountainous seas that brought him to the last stage of his journey.

In England the bursting Spring caught up his spirits. The London parks were ablaze with daffodils and tulips. He took a daily stroll by the edge of the lake in St. James Park for meditation and gloried in the keen air of early Spring. The beauty of the season, the return of new life, seemed to strike him forcibly, and he wrote with enthusiasm:

Spring! Oh most wonderful! Every tree is bursting. There is just a slight green sheen on the hedges where the hawthorn is coming out into leaf, very slowly. Real April weather has set in. Clouds scudding across the sky and every two hours or so a black mass would darken the heavens to windward, and breaking into a shower it would pass overhead and be gone in a few minutes, leaving everything dripping wet in the bright sunshine again. The earth is gorgeous with fields swept like carpets and flowers everywhere. And the blackbird on the still leafless tree in the garden sings the same old song that never grows old.

Friends whom he was meeting again in clubs and coffee houses were once more amazed at his youthful appearance at the age of sixty-eight. There was still a spring in his step, his hair was black, and the things that had enthralled him in youth charmed him still. He studied the forecasts of the approaching cricket season, anticipating a treat in store.

One who met him for the first time thus describes his impression:

So this was the famous Abel of Kwato. . . . I knew he was a missionary. I had an instinct, too, that he was rather a distinguished person. He only stayed a short time. He never sat down. He talked for a few minutes, glanced at a paper, and went out. But he left a very definite impression on my



mind. He bore the heroic stamp. He had passed through the fire. I was glad to have seen him.

"As tough as an oak and full of the very wine of life," his old friend Arthur Porritt described him at the time, adding that he was overflowing with his plans for future extension and was rejoicing in new opportunities that seemed to be opening before him. Indeed, all who met Abel agreed that he struck them as being a young man with a future, rather than a man with forty years of strenuous service behind him, and one whose work was done. He looked forward, not back. He was pushing on. With so much for which he had previously aimed now accomplished, his mind was bent upon new horizons, and unexplored regions, the responsibility for which he had been doing his best to bring home to the Christian people in the United States, and was preparing to do the same in England.

Still in harness, living his life to the utmost and with unabated energy and vision undimmed, giving himself unsparingly to the lifelong cause that was on his heart, Abel was suddenly called Home from the fray. He had once written to his wife:

We do well to have a brighter light burning than even our earthly love for each other can be; a light which can never be extinguished when the darkest hour of our lives comes, and we have to face the awful, inevitable mystery of having our souls torn asunder.

There was a strange sense of completeness about the circumstances of that day, when it came, in spite of the irony that some saw. Abel had put all his affairs in order, completing his correspondence, and leaving no business unsettled. With this done, he set out in blithe spirits upon the last of the long country walks that had been one of the chief delights of his life. In company with his brother, the Reverend Arthur Abel, as they walked and talked together, he enjoyed the sweet spring fragrance of the Surrey downs and lanes. Suddenly a speeding, heavily-laden car came in view, trying to pass another. There

was a skid, a blow; the accident was momentary. Abel partly regained consciousness after he had been taken home, but he never fully realized what had occurred. Characteristically, however, he did remember in a befogged way that the Oxford and Cambridge boatrace was on in two days, and that he must not miss it after all these years away. Then an ambulance took him to the Woolwich Memorial Hospital; but he never regained consciousness. A day or so later—on April 10, 1930—murmuring alternately the name that had been most precious to him in life, and the Name above all names that had claimed his whole strength, Charles William Abel laid down his earthly stewardship.

The news of his sudden death sent a pang round the world. People found it hard to realize that this vibrant personality that shed so warm a radiance of friendliness, always busy yet finding time for everyone, even the most obscure, had gone from this life. He had encircled the world many times in his earthly course and had touched many lives. These, one and all, recalled the grace of his friendship and sorrowed at his passing. "You cannot realize how sweet is the memory of the few days he spent with us," wrote one who had given him a passing hospitality in his travels.

But the picture that all retained was a happy one, and one to warm their hearts. "I see him overflowing with joy and happiness and his love for the work so dear to him," was a first and last impression that remained with one who only met him for a few minutes, and was typical of the memory that his many acquaintances recalled. As they remembered his buoyant spirit, sorrow seemed out of place; rather did the giving of glory to God befit the vivid recollection of one of His very human servants.

At headquarters in London there was an inundation of applause for his work, from administrators and observers. The Papuan Government put on record their appreciation of the selfless service he had rendered to the country of his adoption and to the Empire to which it belonged. "Papua had no greater human friend," wrote the Chairman of a sister society

working in the countr  
 ary, a man of vision, a pioneer on path of mission  
 ress, and one who has always been an inspiration to us all,  
 eulogized the L. M. S. in Australia. Humble people in many  
 walks of life remembered him gratefully for the sympathy and  
 mirth he had brought them.

At the memorial service in the old church of Abel's boyhood  
 at East Hill, where many friends foregathered, whatever they  
 found to say about his achievements and his part in the Chris-  
 tian welfare, all alike paid glowing tribute to what they termed  
 his "genius for friendship," and they remembered how his love  
 for his friends had transcended mere differences of opinion.  
 Most opportune was the triumph of the Hallelujah Chorus that  
 closed the service and sent the friends away, with hearts made  
 strong again, praising God.

Abel's death, called a tragedy by some, "the irony of fate,"  
 another, and referred to by a third as "the inscrutable ways  
 of God," nevertheless continued what in his living he had  
 so fully fulfilled. At Kwato a chastened church was solemnly  
 called to take up the reins that had fallen, and they  
 renewed their pledges in the bearing of responsibil-  
 ity undreamed of in Abel's lifetime. There were  
 some who remembered the precepts of their missionary,  
 who were his death and gladly gave themselves  
 to his cause, whom he had long sought in vain,  
 one with whom he could equal, who was serving  
 his sentence when he heard the news of  
 Abel's death. God, and became "free in-  
 strument to his fellow-Papuans.  
 His hours by Abel's bed-  
 side, from him and from God, and  
 the country Abel loved

is entrusted the high  
 harvest of his life,  
 he is working still,

is re-



CHARLES W. ABEL INTERVIEWING A PAPUAN HELPER.



## CARRINGTON

### A SUPPLEMENT CHAPTER

ON

**G**OD buries His workmen, but I  
 This has been proved abundantly in  
 elsewhere. When the startling first  
 Charles W. Abel, the founder and director of the F  
 sion, had suddenly been called Home, it seemed t  
 not be true. Here was a man who had been clea  
 God and peculiarly fitted for the work. After y  
 service, in the midst of new victories of faith, a  
 vigour and efficiency, and just as doors wer  
 fully before him, he was cut off without  
 could the small but growing work do without  
 leadership? Who had the strength, the ability he  
 vision, the courage to carry on?

As the first disciples of Christ were overwhelmed by the  
 thought of the loss of their beloved Master, the One in whom all  
 their hopes were centred, so the little group of missionaries and  
 Papuan Christians of the Kwato Mission were stunned at the  
 thought of the loss of their beloved Taubada. What would  
 become of the Mission? Then to these disconsolate ones came  
 the same message from their divine Master: "Let not your

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\* Since Mr. Russell Abel, the author of this biography, is a missionary in  
 Papua, it has been impossible to consult him on many questions raised in  
 putting the book through the press. The final preparation of the manu-  
 script, the selection of illustrations and chapter headings, and the proof-  
 reading have therefore been undertaken by the author of this final chapter,  
 Arthur Porritt, Editor of *The Christian World* (London), and other friends  
 have also made valuable suggestions. Miss J. H. Righter, of New York,  
 has kindly prepared the index.



heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in me. . . . I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you. . . . The Holy Spirit will abide with you forever." Charles Abel had gone Home, but the Holy Spirit remained to give guidance and power. The work must go on. It was a time for advance, not for retreat.

In the providence of God, when the saddening news came from England, one of the members of the Kwato Governing Committee was in Singapore on the way to China.<sup>1</sup> Plans were altered to include a visit to the bereaved ones in Kwato, and some weeks were spent there in prayer and conference, seeing the marvellous work and considering plans for the future. The result was the adoption of the "Principles and Practice," in harmony with Mr. Abel's ideals, to govern future policies and plans. These recognize the "Faith principles" in mission work, including entire dependence on God, acceptance of the Bible as the inspired Word of God, emphasis on the prime importance of evangelism and the need for building up a self-supporting native church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. A Field Council was formed, composed of the mission workers at Kwato, with co-operating Councils of prayer-partners in England, America, Australia and New Zealand. The mission methods introduced by the Founder are continued. These include a head-station at Kwato for the development of Spirit-filled Papuan leaders, with elementary education and industrial training, instruction in the laws of health, habits of prayer and Bible study and encouragement to devote their lives to the service of God and their fellow men.

Have the faith and fidelity of the successors of Charles Abel been rewarded? The abiding value of a man's work is revealed, not so much during his life time as after his death. Has he built on the sand or on the Rock? Will the structure stand the test of time? How many great business enterprises; how many governments; how many churches and missions have gone into a decline with the death of the Founder! In the Kwato Mis-

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<sup>1</sup> Mr. and Mrs. Delavan L. Pierson, of New York, were on a world tour in April, 1930.

sion the promises of Christ have been abundantly fulfilled, as they were in the experience of His first disciples. Four years have passed since Charles Abel was called to relinquish his work. In those four years more Papuans have been brought to Christ and added to the church than in the previous forty years. The mission staff has doubled and all four of the Abel children have now responded to the call to devote their lives to the work in Papua. Under the wise counsels of Mrs. Abel and Miss Parkin, the faithful pioneers, the mission is now largely manned by consecrated and trained young people who rejoice in undertaking difficult tasks in dependence on God and in the vigour of youth.

In spite of prolonged financial depression in Papua and in the supporting countries, the past four years have shown encouraging signs of progress. Many of Charles Abel's hopes already give promise of fulfilment backed up by praying and giving partners in America and England. Above all God has set clearly His seal upon the work and the power of the Spirit has been evident in the missionaries, the Papuan Christians and in the whole district. A few extracts from letters from the field, which have appeared in the *Kwato Mission Tidings*, give soul-stirring glimpses of how this work is conducted and picture some of the transformations that have been wrought.

<sup>1</sup> We earnestly prayed that God would especially bless the work during the coming year (1931), with even greater evidences of His power than ever before. It was not long before we began to see that our prayers were heard. It seemed that a fitting start for the year would be if some of our younger volunteer evangelists should visit places where no Christian work was being done. As a result six evangelists set off, two and two in different directions. As the early disciples of Jesus went forth with no provision for their journey, so these Papuan Christians went their different ways—two to Sidea, two due west inland across the mountains to the bush people, and four to the Sagarai Valley, dividing forces when they reached

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<sup>1</sup> These letters have come from various members of the mission staff in the past three years.—D. L. P.

Bohutu. The next two or three weeks we at Kwato upheld them daily before God to fulfil our parting promises to back them with our prayers. At the end of this time they returned, full of joy and eager to tell all that had befallen them.

Tiraka told us of the darkness and depravity that they had seen. It was strange to hear a Papuan speaking, with obvious feeling, of the need of his own countrymen and pleading that we should bestir ourselves in prayer and effort on their behalf. What a contrast to the aimlessly drifting existence of the average Papuan! Wherever they went they found the same dread of witchcraft, sorcery and allied cults, gripping the people like a vice. Village communities had been broken up through the mutual distrust of the inhabitants. "If we live together, we die," was the reply to queries everywhere. At one place, the scene of a once prosperous and now disbanded village, the inhabitants had died one after another with such marked regularity that the survivors had fled, every man suspecting his neighbour of malignant designs and occult powers. The whole life of the people is paralyzed by these pernicious beliefs.

The evangelists endured many privations, especially the lack of food, but they were glad that this was so, for the people could see that they had not come for selfish gain. Wherever the Christians went there was pathetic pleading to come again.

Makura told how he and his fellow evangelists had fared at Sidea Island, where the people, though scattered, live in conditions far superior to those in the Bohutu Valley. They listened readily to the Gospel and many expressed a desire to hear more. At one hamlet a man rose and publicly declared his intention of following Christ's Way. The evangelists were warned to avoid a certain place where lived Kuki, the terror of the countryside. "He has been the death of many. *Tabosima!*" (sorcery) whispered their informants. "He lives alone with his wife. No one will approach him, for we fear his *tabosima*." The following day the evangelists visited Kuki, renowned for his *tabosima*, and found that he was lonely and ostracized, a kind of scapegoat of all Sidea. He was greatly touched that they cared enough for his welfare to visit him.

Makura and Palemeni were rewarded before they turned homeward when two men accepted Christ. One of these had said: "I have waited for someone to show me the New Way."

The other man, expressing his joy in the real change that had come to his heart when he let Christ in, said, "My body may be old and dirty, but my heart truly is God's abiding place."

When Philip and Saulea arrived from the hinterland to the west, their faces were enough to show that prayers had been answered. Philip said, "Our way was long and beset with many difficulties, but all the way we were praising God who led us tenderly as a mother leads her loved child." At one village they met an old man who said he had been seeking to know God, and had come to the conclusion that God, full of compassion, was calling to him. Then he dreamed that he saw a river in flood. Great logs of driftwood were being hurled out to sea. He and his friends wished to cross. He plunged in, but his friends were afraid of the fury of the water. So alone he reached the other bank, though he knew not how he had managed to do so. The people on the other bank were amazed and exclaimed, "How did you get across?" He replied, "I do not know. I only know that I am here."

Then this old man awoke, having great joy, and believing that he was now on God's side, though he could not tell how he had got there. He told his dream to his neighbours and testified to all of the new life he was now to lead. Six others were anxiously seeking the Way through this man's testimony.

"Teach us to pray," was the request on all sides. "I know there is a God," said an ancient bushman, "but how can I reach Him? Teach me how to pray, and it will be well." Though everywhere the ignorance of the people was very great, yet the enlightenment in some cases was no less than marvellous, and can only be accounted for by the Holy Spirit's work.

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*A Pentecostal Experience.*<sup>1</sup>—We are having a wonderful time. From village to village round about Duabo we have gone, telling the story of the Master and pleading with the people to leave their evil ways.

"What is your power, for we have never seen nor felt anything like it," has been asked us again and again. What the Spirit of God did in and through the disciples after Pentecost He has done and is doing for the Papuans. We started at

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<sup>1</sup> A letter from Phyllis D. Abel.

Maivara, then went to Rabi. One Sunday we were led to return to Maivara for the day. It was wonderful to feel the warmth of the delight of the young converts as they clustered round us. The change in appearance of many was remarkable. Those we had left with huge shock heads of hair, and covered with various ornaments, were shorn and looked clean and sane. We visited the people in their houses, praying with the sick, distributing quinine, or liniment to rub on their chests, and issuing invitations to the meeting in the village square, "when the sun reached there"—four o'clock.

That afternoon a record crowd gathered and Tom Kago, one of the first to be converted at Maivara, gave his testimony. Tom was one of the cleverest Papuans we have ever known, but, with all, absolutely bad. Twelve years ago he went to work for white men and sank to the lowest depth. Now he is the Lord's out and out; but he is having a hard time making restitution. His testimony left Maivara breathless, for he is well known there as a terrible sinner. His voice broken with emotion, his face wet with tears, he told how the Lord had pardoned and saved him and made him a new man.

Another remarkable testimony that arrested many, especially among the youths, was Lato's. He is only seventeen years old and was one of the lads that formed the service corps of our campaign. Lato was not a good boy, but before long he came to the Lord and became a very joyful "fisher of men." At Maivara, for the first time in his young life, he stood up before those people and told them what Christ had done for him. There was a group of youths about his own age there, with huge mops of hair and dissatisfied sensuous expressions, and his words went home. I never shall forget walking back and forth through that village in the dark, and in the dim light seeing one of our boys in close conversation, pleading with a huge mop-headed heathen. At another place one of our girls was sitting on the *hatahata* (verandah) of a house listening to the broken confession of a sinning woman. That night eleven souls were born again, bringing the number of our little group of new-born Christians in Maivara up to fifty-one.

\* \* \*

*A Revival.*—There has been a revival going on in this district in the past few months. Not only have many Christians

been wonderfully awakened and filled with the Holy Spirit, but about a thousand men and women have been converted. There has been nothing of the "mass movement" about it. Individuals have been won personally and have immediately set out to win their friends; so the work has spread. The changes in the people's lives have been no less than volcanic. Those who are converted immediately get busy with what they call *hedudurai paisoa*—"the work of putting right"—which is making as thorough restitution as they can, working hard to make enough money to pay debts, hunting up those from whom they want forgiveness and so forth. A number of people connected with spirit cults, witches and sorcerers, have been completely delivered. Theirs is the most wonderful testimony of all. Many were dominated by spirits, awful haggard-looking people, always emaciated. When released, their whole appearance changes and they begin to get fat. The joy in their faces is something one can never forget.

There is much work to be done in teaching these new converts. Fortunately, Papuan Christians are keen to help and one sees little groups of twos and threes in earnest conversation or bent together over a Gospel. Those who can read make it their business to teach those who cannot. Everything any one has in knowledge of Scripture, or personal experience of blessing, is promptly passed on. Many are hungry for all the spiritual help they can get. Some came from mountains inland, a two-days' journey. Many of the Christian men and women have great victory in their lives, and though they have come from such dirt and degradation, they have become clean and enthusiastic Christians. The numbers of Christians and inquirers have so increased that some of our present buildings are not big enough to contain the people. It is a real problem in wet weather; on fine days there is always the open air.

\* \* \*

Child conversion is wonderfully real, and the change in many of the children is very marked. Some difficult boys and girls are now untiring personal workers, being used to win others. Their testimony and their prayers are a real contribution to the spiritual life of our stations. Best of all, boys who in times past had to be expelled—and in a country like this they are pretty incorrigible before that becomes a necessity—are all



back again and are now the brightest and most powerful Christian lads in our schools. A good evidence of the genuineness of the change in many schoolboys is the way they are putting their hearts into their work. For instance, the boy who looks after the playground has it always in perfect condition, with the surrounding lawn kept mown, and flower beds and such like improvements that he has started, as a witness to God's grace in him. That is the sort of spirit that permeates the whole school now. We marvel at the power of God manifested in so many ways. One old converted witch at Wagawaga terrorized everybody. She used to dig up graves and eat the corpses—a usual witch practice—and gave a demonstration of her powers that harrows everyone. She confesses to have murdered eleven people. Now she is completely saved from all that darkness and is filled with joy. She tells everyone about what the Lord has done for her.

A few months ago at Wagawaga, in one of our out-stations, there was a small village school. Today there are 160 children at that same school. Their parents have been converted in the villages round about and wish their children to be taught how to live Christian lives, so they send them to the Mission School. Some live so far away that they cannot possibly go into Wagawaga every day. To meet the difficulty, many Christian women in the village have taken these children into their homes. One woman feeds thirteen children, including her own, and she testifies to the fact that since she has taken in these children and has done this for the Master, her garden has been more fruitful than ever before. The devil will not allow these victories to be won without a big fight, and there has been extraordinary opposition.

\* \* \*

*Bokamani's Experience.*—A young man named Bokamani was converted, and went with workers on an evangelistic journey. Months passed and Bokamani, having grown in grace, felt led to return to the mountains, where he had had his first experience of Christian work. He set out with much trepidation, as he was ignorant and inexperienced, though full of zeal. Would the people listen to his message? He prayed a great deal, and felt definitely guided to say nothing at first, but simply to live his new life before the people. For two weeks he

lived in Gumi village waiting for the Spirit's command to speak. In that time he did all in his power to live as though Jesus were living in that village. He carried firewood for astonished old women. He helped them with their burdens as they staggered back from their gardens laden with produce. He fetched drinking water from the spring. Such simple ministering to others out of kindness and not for payment was unknown in that heathen village.

Life can be very bitter in a Papuan community. Any unfortunate one is nicknamed for his disability and is the butt of unkind jests. For the first time in his life a bewildered cripple found himself lovingly cared for and waited upon. He received the touch of kindness that cripples knew of old in the high-ways of Judea. The people were amazed.

At last the day came when the Spirit said "Speak," and Bokamani told the story of his conversion and of the change in his own life. His words explained a mystery. The people had seen his life and he was soon leading them one by one to his Master. Bokamani is still an uneducated follower of the Lord Jesus, but of his own deliverance from sin he has no doubt. He has a visible religion.

\* \* \*

One Sunday morning, early in March, 1931, I was interrupted by Tanuadi and Koeawaku, who had brought eight men with their wives. All were strangers to me, though living only across the water in the mountain behind Bukou. They possessed keen faces and were all hefty fellows; one in particular was the biggest man I have seen around here. He had a piercing eye that seemed to look right through me. Their hair was trimmed, they wore loin cloths, and there was a noticeable absence of any arm, ear, nose or leg ornaments. This meant that they were *tau eoo* (seekers).

Tanuadi and Koeawaku are the two *Babadas* or Leaders of the little group of Christians at Kihina. Though none of them can read or write, everything they learn is stored in their minds. Each Sunday they visit these inland villages witnessing to the new life that is theirs in Christ.

God had used their simple testimony, and sixteen souls were born again into the kingdom of God. I imagined that they would require much teaching before they grasped what this

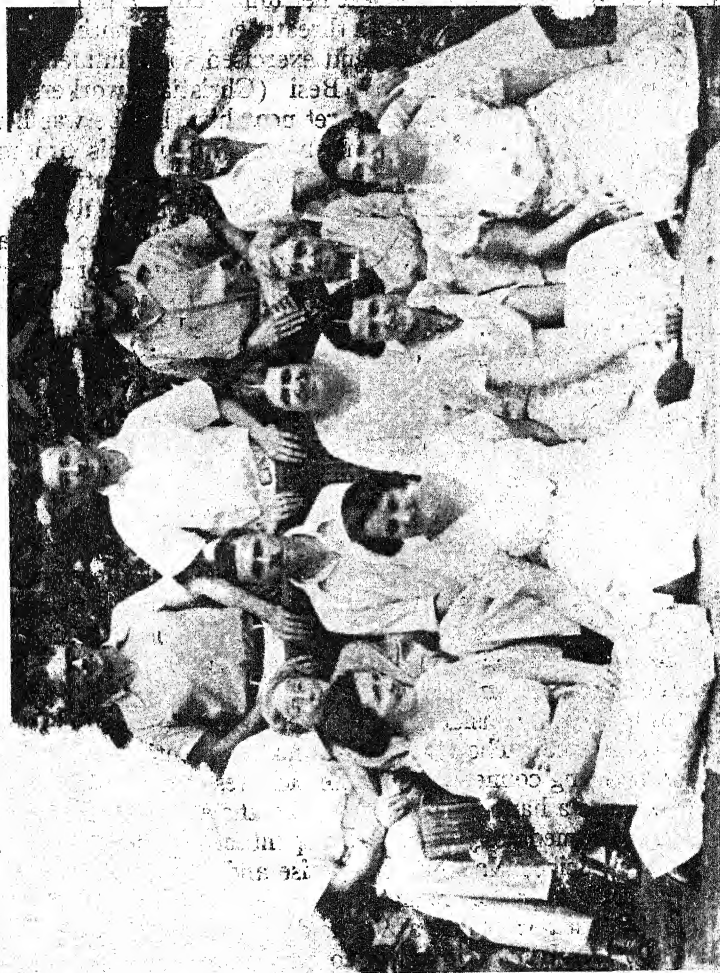
tremendous. It meant for them, but I was mistaken. Yes, it was real to these simple folk. One Marea, had been wonderfully converted. Her husband was a beast; he beat her unmercifully and scoffed and ridiculed her "change." He was a sorcerer. He and his brother were sorcerers and his name was Besi. Both Alaidi and Marea (the man who was at Duabo) had tried many times to get near him, but he would not. He was all Bohutus, he lived unto the flesh, and he and his brother were antagonistic. But the young woman, Marea, continued to pray for her husband and occasionally went up to Duabo for rest! Two months later I stood on the brow of the hill at Duabo overlooking the Bay. Just then a man approached, soberly saluted me and passed on. He had a kind, intelligent face, his loin cloth was clean and he seemed to be quite at home on the station, in fact he looked like a Christian! But I had never seen him before. "That," said Besi, "is Marea's husband. His new name is Abarahama. He and his brother are both converted; they have left their village because the old life down there, they say, makes them feel sick. They have come to live on that hill over there to be near to us."

\* \* \*

We have been thrilled by recent meetings with the Papuan leaders. We had spent much time considering the important subject of the attitude of Christians toward heathen burial customs. This has been a bone of contention in the past, and a source of much weakness.

After prayerful consideration of every aspect of the question there was silence. Then those in favour of an end to everything connected with the old rites asked to raise a hand. To the joy of all it went up! Immediately there was a spontaneous singing to the precious Name all the praise of the complete triumph over the enemy.

The first speaker to rise after the old chief, Hinadarunaki, was the first to speak in the campaign early in the year. He was for those who had given their hearts to Christ, no holding on to the customs of the past. The first



*Top Row: RUSSELL ABEL, JOHN SMEETON, ARTHUR BEAVIS, ARTHUR SWINFIELD, VISITOR.  
 Middle Row: MISS PARKIN, CECIL ABEL, PHYLLIS ABEL, MRS. CHARLES ABEL.  
 Bottom Row: MRS. SWINFIELD, MRS. BEAVIS, MRS. SMEETON, MARY ABEL.*

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must be wholly voluntary, and rendered out of love and compassion.

So Hinadarunaki has given the death-blow to the many corrupt practices in connection with the dead. All who heard him gave their grunts of hearty approval. This cuts very deeply into the worst forms of sorcery. What a change the Gospel is going to work at Maivara!

\* \* \*

The Papuan Leader's Conference at Koeabule brought together 180 men present from most parts of the District. Two men came from the most recent outpost on the slopes of Mt. Thompson—primitive mountain folk, with a strange cast of countenance, speaking a blunt, hard-sounding language, very different from the easy, flowing speech of the Papuan seacoast. At least three distinct languages were represented, and three times that number of dialects. In a public meeting one delegate from Dagama, addressing his remarks to the hereditary enemies of his tribe, said:

"My brothers, see what the Gospel has done! A few years ago had I walked from my village you would have captured and eaten me long before I reached Koeabule. With great cunning I might have made my way as far as Rabé, but certainly no further."

Each morning at sunrise we could see people everywhere under the trees, on the beach, wherever any degree of isolation could be found, seated with their heads bent over their Suau tablets, or in attitudes of prayer. This was the "Quiet Hour."

Koukou delegate testified: "The early morning calm is the fisherman's opportunity to catch bait. After he has caught it, he does not care what happens. Let the winds blow, let it rain, he has his bait. It is the same with us. The early morning calm is the time for us to get our 'bait.' Then we will not care what befalls us." Truly a Papuan parable!

The men who had come were all leaders and workers in their local Christian groups. Some were very ignorant, and unable even to read and write. Yet village Christians, as well as many heathen people, look to these men as examples of the Christian faith and life. It was sheer necessity that they should know the secret of victory in their own lives and be able to testify to God's power and control over everything.



Many realized that they were really clinging to, or hiding behind, the things in their lives they were asking God to remove. These things ranged from shyness and unwillingness, to untruthfulness, dishonesty, impurity, the drug-like domination of betel-chewing and similar bondage; and, above all, lack of love.

The latter conviction was universal. The Holy Spirit had many elemental things to teach that were new and unknown to these Papuan Christians—about Christian marriage. Many went away from Koeabule with an immediate commission from God to love their wives, to make amends to them, and to share the blessing they had received with them first, before seeking to pass it on to others. Almost everyone went away with definite work to do. The new obedience had to be worked out in daily practice. There were confessions and apologies to be made to friends, past sins to be put right, testimonies to be given in the village. Half measures are not enough in a country like Papua.

The Kwato workers were kept hard at work by personal interviews without number, and by prayer. Occasionally as we prayed we sang choruses, and learned later that many were helped when they heard that we were praying for them. For some, those prayer-choruses, heard in the distance, sounded as a battle-cry of the conquering Saviour.

The climax of the conference occurred early on the last morning, in the intense calm in which day dawns in Papua. We all gathered by the water's edge to see fifty men follow their Saviour and to be identified with Him in death by baptism. We then adjourned to a shady spot under a grove of trees and held an open-air communion service. There were over three hundred present at this gathering.

\* \* \*

*The "Power House."*—In a battle like ours we can never remain long away from the place of prayer. The enemy is always busy, and sometimes he succeeds in blinding and deceiving even those who have known the grace of our Lord.

One of the greatest forces for good in the whole district is the "Power House," which we find on all our stations, wherever there is a little group of Christians (prayer meeting). At Kwato the people come and go from 6 to 8:30 every evening,

as they are able to leave their duties, but prayer continues all that time. Sometimes the room is full, perhaps a little later there will be only two, but He is there. On the door of the room where it is held hangs a notice:

“QUIET—POWER HOUSE IN.”

On Sundays the people start praying at 2:30 and go on until 6 P. M. While many are out working in the villages round about, others pray, and the Power House has been the means of untold blessing. Since it started there have been some wonderful answers to prayer. Our prayers encircle the whole world.

The work of the Kwato Mission is evangelical, evangelistic and practical, and the spirit of sacrificial love prevails among the workers.

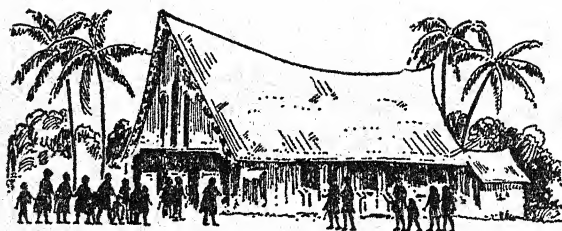
At the centre of the head training station is the House of Prayer, a Memorial to the beloved “Taubada.” It is built as a gift of love by volunteer service of the Papuans, and is of native materials and after native design. Other features of the work which are fulfilling the dream of the Founder are represented by the elementary grade schools, the technical school, the carpentry and boat-building shop, the smithy, the printing press, and the bakery and women’s industries, the cricket and football field, the store, the hospital and children’s home, the central Mission House and the little cottages for foreign and Papuan workers. Everything is clean, simple, and inexpensive but is planned to be attractive and suited to the development of healthy Christian life among a primitive people. Twenty-seven or more out-stations are equipped with coconut plantations, gardens, primary schools taught by native Christian teachers, and Churches ministered to by faithful (unpaid) Papuan elders.

It is the earnest hope and prayer of the Mission staff and their “partners in the other boat” that the work may soon be further extended into some of the unoccupied fields of the interior of this great island. This was also the hope of Charles Abel and is the reason for the name “Kwato Extension Associ-

ation." While there are other effective missions in Papua<sup>1</sup> there are still thousands of square miles never yet trodden by messengers of the Gospel, and there are hundreds of thousands who have never yet heard the message of life and liberty in Christ. May it not be that these Papuan disciples, brought out of the bondage of darkness and fear and trained at Kwato, may become the pioneers of Christ in many of the unevangelized regions beyond? It is a work of God in which He offers the joys of partnership with Him.

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<sup>1</sup> The Anglican, the Lutheran, the London Missionary Society and the Australian Methodist.



THE MEMORIAL HOUSE OF PRAYER

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